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1879

SERMONS

FOR

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN KEBLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN YEAR."

SOLD BY

JAMES PARKER AND CO. OXFORD,
AND 377, STRAND, LONDON.

1879.

*W.H.C. Malton
for his copy
S.H.
1880*

SERMONS
FOR
THE SAINTS' DAYS
AND
OTHER FESTIVALS

BY THE LATE
REV. JOHN KEBLE,
AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN YEAR."

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SERMON I.

SAINTS ARE LIKE SPARKS IN STUBBLE.

S. ANDREW'S DAY.

S. JOHN i. 41.

“He first findeth his own brother Simon.”

WE are now come to the end of one more year of the Church Sundays and holidays. For another twelve-month we have had the Church open, not only on the one day in the week, which all, who call themselves Christians at all, think themselves bound in some sort to keep holy, but also on those other days on which the Prayer-book directs us to remember the holy Saints and Martyrs of old, both for their good examples' sake, and also in token of our continual communion by faith with that blessed company who have gone before us into Paradise. We have tried to honour God in them, as the holy Church directs; but some persons would be apt to say, we have tried it with very little profit. Few, very few, were those among us, who at first shewed any disposition to take part in this service; and few, very few, they continue still. If one judged of such matters by outward appearance, or looked anxiously to any present visible effect, surely one should be much tempted to leave off these Saints-day services

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altogether, or substitute for them something else, which should draw more people, and seem to do more good.

But, in the first place, the rule of the Church is plain. We cannot leave off these services without direct and manifest disobedience to the Prayer-book. They are as distinctly ordered in that book, as the service of the Sunday itself.

In the next place, to leave off any service, *merely* because we do not see the good effects of it, supposing it to be otherwise right, seems not well to agree with the first principle of all goodness—*faith*. Think of the great example of all. Jesus Christ, hanging on the Cross, ceases not “^a all day to stretch forth His hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.” If the Church be truly crucified with Him, (and that is the very pledge and seal of her being,) she too, must be content to do the same. She is not to cease stretching forth her hands, because her children are “disobedient and gainsaying:” not, though they were all such.

And what, if but few come? Who can tell how much good the Almighty may have wrought, or may one day purpose to work in and by some one or more of those few, who are able and willing to come? Who knows what ample growth, what abundant fruit may be given to some seed of truth and grace, scattered, as to men it would seem, almost at random, on such an occasion as this?—an occasion which the world in general agrees to pass by in such utter neglect.

Let us just look to the history of the saint, whose memory we this day honour. So it is, that he comes

^a Rom. x. 21.

first in the list, of whom divine providence has caused *that* to be set down, which may most encourage us in continuing such services as these, however little countenance we generally find for them.

S. Andrew is the first of the Apostles, whom the Church commemorates. Look now into the Scripture notices of S. Andrew, and see how he first came to Christ. Was it not by a kind of providential chance? by what the world, speaking humanly, would call a kind of happy accident? In the same sort of way as if any one person, coming here regularly when he could, on saints' days as well as on Sundays, should *happen* (so we speak, but we know what it means,) to hear something in the collect, or lessons, or sermon, which might just meet some spiritual want of his, and do him good for ever.

For thus it was. S. Andrew, being a disciple of S. John the Baptist, *happened* to be standing with him one day, not long after S. John had come to the knowledge, that Jesus was the Christ, by the voice which came from heaven, and the Holy Ghost which descended on Him at His Baptism. S. Andrew *happened* to be one of two, who heard S. John, at sight of our Lord, utter those memorable words, which the Holy Ghost, probably by their witness, has preserved for the Church to all generations. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." So hearing, they both followed Jesus, and abode with Him that day: and what S. Andrew saw and heard, together with S. John's testimony, convinced him that this was indeed the Anointed of the Lord, the promised Saviour. It prepared him to forsake all that he had, when the

same Jesus, not long after, called on him to do so, and to become a fisher of men. Thus the gathering of Christ's people began: not by any overpowering manifestation of Him, such as one might expect after the wonders of His Baptism, but privately and quietly, and as we should say, by accident.

And as this gathering began, so also it went on. The very next thing we read is, that S. Andrew "first found his own brother Simon," he who was afterwards the beloved Apostle S. Peter, and "brought him to Jesus," assuring him that He was the Christ. Both of them, as it may seem, both S. Andrew and the other whose name is not mentioned, went to look for S. Peter. Knowing no doubt his zealous, earnest, dutiful temper, they wished to lose no time in making him partaker of the glad tidings. Both most likely looked for him; but S. Andrew his brother found him first.

Here the same word, *findeth*, is used again, as also twice afterwards in the continuation of the same narrative: in the calling first of S. Philip, and afterwards of Nathanael. "The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and *findeth* Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me." The Holy Ghost seems on purpose to have guided the pen of the holy Evangelist so, as if he should say, "Christ being on the point of departure into Galilee, it so *happened*, that, just before His departure He fell in with Philip:" who, being of Bethsaida, had, perhaps, heard something of Him from Andrew and Peter, both of whom were of the same place, and so was the readier to listen to the call, when directly given.

Again, he goes on, "Philip *findeth* Nathanael."

It so *happened*, that the next person Philip should light upon, should be Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the town to which our Lord was going, which Nathanael was also prepared, by knowledge of the old Scriptures, and still more by his guileless and simple heart, to believe in Christ, when he should see Him.

Thus our Lord, having been without disciples when He was first seen coming to S. John, went into Galilee with four or five at least: who were present at His first miracle, and so seeing His glory had their faith confirmed in Him. And all this was owing, under God, to S. Andrew's taking advantage of the providential *accident* of our Lord's passing by, where he was standing with S. John.

Further: in what little besides Holy Scripture tells us of this Apostle, we may, if I mistake not, trace something of the same way of thinking and acting. He seems to have been remarkable for what one may call *spiritual presence of mind*: a disposition to observe and to treasure up, what to others might possibly seem mere casual and insignificant matters, as not knowing what good might be secretly laid up in them, for those who would mark them in the fear of God.

Thus, as, in the text, S. Andrew was made instrumental in preparing many to be Apostles of Christ, so afterwards a remark of his led in a manner to the miracle of the loaves, and to the treasure of divine knowledge concerning the bread which came down from heaven, contained in the discourse which followed that miracle. For when our Lord, seeing the multitude, began to try His disciples, saying first to

S. Philip, “^b Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” and Philip, according to his simplicity, seemed to think it out of the question, S. Andrew, with deeper thought, but not without perplexity, pointed out that they had among them just five loaves and two fishes: “but what,” said he, “are they among so many?” Apparently he had observed enough of our Lord’s manner to feel sure that He did not ask the question without some deep meaning; he rather anticipated some great manifestation of Him; but of what particular kind was beyond his conjecture.

So again, when our Lord’s time was drawing near, we read of certain Greeks, Greek Jews from a distance, who had come up to the Passover, and who, wishing to see Jesus, made their desire known first to Philip. Philip, as it would seem, doubting whether the matter was of consequence enough to trouble our Lord about it, “cometh and telleth Andrew: and again, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus:” Andrew probably having, as before, the deeper sense of the two, that this and every thing else which took place in relation to their divine Master was in the strictest sense providential and mysterious, and must not be allowed to go by as utterly insignificant.

Lastly, whereas we find S. Andrew’s name mentioned among the four who came to our Lord privately, with the question about “the sign of His coming, and the end of the world;” (for the four were Peter and James and John and Andrew :) this also agrees well with the idea we have been giving of his character. Our Lord had said, as it were incidentally, as He

^b S. John vi. 5.

came out of the temple, “^cThere shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.” There was something probably in His manner, which told watchful observant persons, such as S. Andrew, that this was more than a mere passing hint or remark, on the transitory nature of worldly glories. Accordingly he noticed it, and did not permit it to fall to the ground, but, following the clue which his gracious Master no doubt offered for that very purpose, he obtained from Him, for us, and for the whole Church, that awful warning, concerning the latter days and the final judgement, which perhaps tells more than any other passage in Scripture towards keeping up something like the fear of God in a revolting and rebellious world.

Thus we see how much was gained not only for Andrew himself, and for those persons whom he brought directly to Christ, but also for Christ’s kingdom in all ages, and for ourselves among the rest, by this one saint’s diligent and dutiful watching of all opportunities and hints for instruction and devotion. He suffered nothing to pass away as in a dream. He was so firmly persuaded that God is in all things, little and great, that he never would put away from his thoughts any thing that might be providential, under the pretence that it was too trifling, too remote from religion to be worth noticing in that point of view.

Why should not you and I learn this holy lesson of him? If not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, much more may we learn of this great saint to believe that none of His words, or the words of His Church, falling on our ears by His providence,

^c S. Matt. xxiv. 2.

were intended to fall in vain. It may be that many of us, when they come to Church, cannot even hear a great deal of the holy service: and that even of what they do hear, a great deal is beyond their understanding. But I wish they would consider that this makes those portions, which they do hear and follow in their minds, so much the more like distinct providential warnings, voices from heaven to them personally. When any thing strikes you particularly in a prayer or lesson, more especially if you are deaf or very ignorant, you have reason to think that Almighty God would have you lay hold of *that* thought, carry it home with you, think on it afterwards, see what difference it should make in your conduct, perhaps consult your minister about it. You must give an account of it somehow or other; you cannot be as if it had never entered into your mind.

So much for S. Andrew's Christian presence of mind, as it may be exercised in treasuring up and improving the hints which we receive in this place, especially from the Church and the Word of God. Next, consider whether it may not be also exercised, much to your own and others' profit, in your intercourse with your brethren. Would that our eyes were more open, as S. Andrew's were, to the chances which continually occur, of doing our fellow-creatures, especially our relations and those of the same household, spiritual good! Why are not those, who in some sort have acknowledged our Lord in their hearts, more intent, than they generally seem, upon first finding their own brothers, their own wives, children, near friends, and bringing them also to Jesus, not in word only, and in mere knowledge, not

only by such things as sending them to school (which yet is a plain duty and too much neglected), but much more by watchful care against the first beginnings of sin : by checking heedfully the first oath, the first lewd or profane jest ; by anxious watching to see that prayers are said, and lessons learned, and obedience to ministers and teachers practised ?

All these and many more, which true Christian love will find out for herself, are the ways of bringing children, and others committed to our charge, to the knowledge and love of God : to the neglect of which, in good measure, we must attribute this sad result, that in so many families, where the parents seem religious, the children grow up without the fear of God. S. Andrew, you have heard, was on the watch, wherever, and among whomsoever, he was : he availed himself discreetly, not in an affected way, of every opening which God's providence gave him, for bringing first his own brother, and then his friends, and then strangers, to Jesus. It is true Christian wisdom, to do as he did : not violently introducing on all occasions the mention of the most sacred things, but never leaving them out of your mind, and gently doing what you can, to make people's attention turn towards them of itself. In this way, a look, a tone of voice, or a single word, used for that purpose humbly and in the fear of God, will often do more good, and less tempt both speaker and hearer to any kind of hypocrisy, than a set and formal discourse would.

To conclude, by briefly returning to the point from which I began. If it be so great a part of Christian goodness, to catch up the loose hints which the pro-

vidence of God strews everywhere in our way, we may not think our time lost, if we strive to keep up God's worship and honour, and to obey Him, sanctifying in His Church such days as these, though but two or three be then gathered together in His Name to meet us there. It rests with ourselves, who do come, to take care that this our good custom (for I will boldly call it so, being, as it is, in strict obedience to the Prayer-book,) be not idle and without fruit. It depends on ourselves, seriously to improve the memory of every saint, as it occurs, by honouring God for him, and practising his good example; instead of indulging mere wonder, that so few are found to care for this part of God's service, or mere complaint of the decay of Church rules in our days. As we go about our daily tasks, we may see many chances of doing good, each in his own little way, and not a few, wherein we may set on others to do that, which is out of our line or beyond our power. We may quietly notice those occasions, which, if we mark them, will continually arise, causing us to attend to something in our own conduct, which hitherto, by comparison at least, we have neglected: and thus we may become, not in outward show, but in inward reality, more strict and particular, in other words better and happier, every day that we live in this world. In short, we may make it our rule, never to think any thing beneath notice, which is ordered by God's providence, and for which immortal souls may be the better or the worse; ever remembering that the Apostle's rule holds alike for good or evil: "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

^a S. James iii. 5.

SERMON II.

THE BLESSING OF MAKING GOOD USE OF OPPORTUNITIES.

S. ANDREW'S DAY.

S. JOHN i. 40.

“One of the two which heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew.”

It is now about 1851 years, since the holy S. John the Baptist was standing with some of his disciples near the place, where he had been baptizing. The day before, in their hearing, he had been telling the Priests and Levites, that there was even then among them, One Whom they little thought of; One Who, coming after him, was preferred before him, the latchet of Whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose. And now he sees Jesus coming unto him, and points Him out as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” He declares that he knew Him, by the Spirit descending and making Its abode upon Him. Upon that sight he bears witness, “that this is the Son of God.”

This was the Baptist's witness on one day, and on the next day, coming again to the accustomed place with two of his disciples, he sees our Lord again,

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and repeats the same testimony concerning Him : “Behold, the Lamb of God.” It is particularly mentioned that there were two disciples with him, and that one of the two was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, the great saint whom we remember to-day. He was then a poor ignorant fisherman, nothing remarkable, that we know of about him, except that he had joined himself to S. John, so as to be called one of his disciples. But now he is one of the greatest and most glorious of saints ! What is the reason of the difference ? How did the poor fisherman obtain so great advancement ? How came he to be so high in the kingdom of heaven ? Simply because he made use of the opportunity, which God put in his way. When he heard S. John say, “Behold the Lamb of God,” of course, had he been so minded, he could have turned his mind to other things ; he might have taken no notice at all of that saying : especially as the person, of whom it was spoken, was to the outward eye, very poor, mean, and insignificant. He might have said to himself, “This is a mere fancy of S. John’s : at any rate, I will wait and see what manifestation this person makes of himself, and what other people say of him.” He might have said, “I am very busy : I am a poor fisherman, and have my bread to get ; I cannot be following after every new person, who comes well recommended to me.” He might have said, “The Jews from Jerusalem have been sending persons to enquire, and I do not find that they are satisfied : I will wait and see what their opinion is.” All this and more S. Andrew might have said, and so excused himself from following Jesus. But he said none of these things. He simply

took the opportunity which God gave. He followed at once, where his Master pointed out the way. Well was it for him, that he did so : for He Whom he followed, was Jesus the Saviour of the world : the only person, Who never can be followed in vain. Jesus turned, as He always turns when He sees any following Him in good earnest ; He looked upon them, no doubt with that gracious look, which He was used to turn towards those, in whom He saw some good thing, the beginning of conversion : such as was that young ruler, of whom we read, that Jesus beholding him, loved him. He looked upon them, and said, "Whom seek ye?" It is the question which He asks by His Spirit of every one's heart, whom He sees outwardly drawing near to Him. "Whom seek ye?" "What is your object? What is the true desire and wish of your heart? Do you come to Me for your soul's good, or for mere custom, fancy, or curiosity? Is it because you have seen My miracles, My wonderful working in men's hearts; or for some present advantage, or comfort; 'because ye did eat of the loaves and are filled?'" Thus we may understand our Lord's question, "Whom seek ye?" and whereas S. Andrew and his companion answer, "Where dwellest Thou?" we may understand them to mean, "We seek, O Lord, to be with Thee, to be with Thee where Thou art: not where Thou comest and goest, but where Thou dwellest and abidest for ever. That is our object, that is the only thing which can satisfy us." When any one with a true heart seeks thus after Christ's abiding-place, He will be sure to say, "Come and see." He will shew His true worshippers some part of the blessings of His

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home, quite enough to fill them with longing desire to remain there. Accordingly the two disciples came and saw where our Lord dwelt, and abode with Him the rest of that day. It was about the tenth hour, i.e. according to S. John's reckoning, about 10 o'clock in the morning. So that they had a good long time, a good many hours before nightfall, to become acquainted with Jesus Christ, and to wonder "at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." This happy day, and we know not how much besides, S. Andrew owed, under God's mercy, to his taking the opportunities which were offered him : listening, when he heard speak of Jesus ; when He was pointed out to him, answering His first gracious look and word by asking where He dwelt ; following to see ; coming, when He invited him ; staying, as long as he might. When shall we be like S. Andrew in this respect ? We too hear of Jesus continually : our teachers and our ministers, our parents and friends, our Bibles and other good books, are evermore proclaiming in our ears, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Have we attended in earnest to the first call ? Did we come the next day and the following day, seeking His grace and favour ? Has He by His good Spirit answered our prayer, and permitted us to see a few of the saving wonders of His home ? Blessed indeed are we, if it be so ! Only, being once in Christ's earthly home, the Church, let us see to it that we abide there the whole of that day, the whole of our life, what yet remains of it. Little enough it will be at best, to offer to Him, Who gives us all. Let us at least "do our diligence gladly to give of that little."

This is what we may well learn by the first passage told us of S. Andrew's history : viz. how precious a rule it would be, for every one who desires to please God, to be quick and ready in seizing opportunities of that kind : not to stand waiting till they are passed, but to seize them at once, not knowing whether or no any fresh opportunity will be granted.

So we must do for our own soul's good ; and so we must do for our brethren's good also. We must not trifle with our opportunities of doing good ; but whatsoever good thing of that sort our hand findeth to do, we must do it with all our might : lest it pass away quite out of our reach. So did S. Andrew. Having become acquainted with the Christ himself, his next care was to bring to Him his younger brother Simon : whom our Lord at this very time, because of his faith, honoured with a new name. He called him Rock, because of that Rock on which the Church was to be builded. It was the beginning of all our Lord's great mercy to S. Peter : and the beginning of *it* was, S. Andrew being watchful to make him known to our Lord.

Another example of S. Andrew's watching opportunities, we find just before the miracle of the five loaves. When Christ and His disciples were at a loss for food, it was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, who noticed out of all the crowd just a little boy with a basket ; having come out, most likely, to wait upon some of the Apostles : and in the basket, according to the usual abstemiousness of that holy company, only just five loaves, and two fishes. This S. Andrew pointed out to our Lord : and so he was the happy occasion of His working that glorious

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miracle. If he had said nothing of the boy's being there, if he had passed it by as a mere chance thing, not worth mentioning to his Master, the peculiar blessing which he obtained that day would have been lost to him.

Last of all, we are reminded in to-day's collect, how S. Andrew made use of the most blessed and glorious opportunity of all, the being called expressly by Christ, to make haste and follow Christ at once. Being called by His holy Word, "Follow Me," he, and his brother with two friends, did at once give themselves up to fulfil His holy commandment. "They forsook all, and followed Christ." There was no debate, no murmur, no turning back. The opportunity was seized at once, and the poor fisherman became a great Apostle and martyr.

My brethren, life is full of opportunities, to every one of us, as surely as to S. Andrew. They meet us at every turn, if we will but notice them. Every hour we may do some little towards making our place with Christ sure : so great, so unwearied is His mercy towards us. Life is full of opportunities, but it is not every one who has a heart to seize them : and so, most of them, alas ! slip by unimproved : and so do us harm instead of good : take us farther from Christ, instead of bringing us nearer to Him. Let it not be so always with us. Now at least, let us begin to watch for our Saviour's godly motions within us, and to make the most both of them and of all our outward helps. Pray we for a calm, even, cheerful, self-denying spirit : the eyes of our mind open to see what should be done, our souls and bodies prepared at once to set about it : and all for Christ's



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sake, and not for the praise of men, nor for any comfort of this world. Then, bye and bye^a, [we shall reap, if we faint not. Every whisper of God's good Spirit points out to us some such opportunity, slight in itself; but many slight things make great things; many little obediences make a habit of obedience to God's loving commands. Such might be, to take some vacant moment to pray. If it is seized, it might be the beginning of manifold, multiplied prayers, each of which would be heard by God. It might be, to say some word for God, or against sin, or sinful negligence of God. If seized, it might suggest fresh occasions of speaking for God, and zeal for His glory, and confessing Him before men, and doing good, very simply and quietly, to our brother's soul.

Our Lord teaches us, how, in the Day of Judgment, both those who shall be saved, and those who shall be lost, shall find, that they have used or neglected opportunities, of which, at the time, they thought nothing, and the value of which they did not understand. But the use or neglect of those opportunities led them, step by step, to the right hand or the left. Those on the right hand were, out of the love which God gave them, often doing kind things, which God gave them or suggested to them to do. They thought nothing of them, and were right not to think any thing of them. They gave perhaps to a poor man who came to the door a crust

^a The MS. closed with the note, "Finish with S. Matt. xxv. ... and we shall see where He dwells &c. S. John xiv." No more of the Sermon was written. I have tried, as I could, to expand the note, in some such way as I gathered from it, that the sermon was meant to be concluded. E. B. P.

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of bread, which they wanted themselves; or they gave the cup of cold water, which our Lord singles out, as a very slight thing to be done, but which, He says, "shall not lose its reward;" or they gave some clothes to one who had not enough to keep off the cold; or they went to nurse a sick neighbour, tending them carefully during the restless hours at night, (as some of you have often done, not minding the loss of a night's sleep, although you had to work hard the next day). They did it, because it was the kind and loving thing to do, and because they would be glad to have the like done to themselves, if they were ill. But such little things God set down in His Book; and look, how our Lord, the Judge, says, it shall be openly displayed on that Great Day, upon which our eternity depends. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." Now, the special lesson for us to-day, is that they were things, of which they took no account. And look, they were occasions, and great occasions, and won for them that greatest of all rewards, the gracious sentence of our Judge, the being called "the blessed of His Father," the entrance into His everlasting kingdom. So also those who missed the like occasions, missed everlasting life, thinking all the while that they were guilty of no great negligences: they would have taken it ill, perhaps they would have resented it, had they been told they were neglecting

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our Lord. They just did *not* do the things, which the others did. They made this or that excuse to themselves, why they did not do it. They found plenty of reasons; but they did not see, that on each such occasion, it was Christ, Whom they were refusing; and that, in “^b shutting up their bowels of compassion” from their “brother,” they were shutting the love of God out of their heart: yea, shutting out their Redeemer, Who was knocking at their heart, so that He would have to shut them out at the Great Day.

Let us, after the example of the great Apostle, begin this day to watch for these opportunities. So will our Lord be able to fulfil towards us His own loving purpose, “^cif I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” And we shall see where He dwells; for, through His infinite mercy, we shall “abide” with Him “for ever ^d.”]

^b 1 S. John iii. 17.

^c S. John xiv. 2.

^d Ib. viii. 35.

SERMON III.

THE UNBELIEF OF CHRISTIANS IN THEIR SUPERNATURAL CONDITION.

S. THOMAS' DAY.

S. JOHN XX. 25.

“Except I shall see in His Hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His Side, I will not believe.”

THE Church of England's collect for to-day points out a great providential advantage, which we may have by this perplexity and doubt of the blessed S. Thomas. “For the more confirmation of our faith” he was suffered to be without full faith for a time. Our Lord, in His mercy, permitted him both to see and touch His glorious and saving Wounds, and so all doubt was taken away, which might have lingered in any person's mind from the manner of His appearing to the other disciples before. Coming and going, as He did, in a shadowy manner, the doors being shut, some might think they had only seen a spirit. But now there could be no doubt that it was His very Body: no doubt, that we too shall see that same Body

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with the same marks of His Wounds in It. We shall see them in the Last Day, to our condemnation if we have crucified Him anew, and opened those Wounds, so to speak, afresh by our sins: we shall see Him and them to our everlasting bliss and joy, if, through His mercy, we have remembered them in time, denied ourselves, and overcome the flesh. This we are quite sure of; the more sure and certain, for that unbelief of S. Thomas: and so far, it was ordered providentially for our good.

Yet, in itself, there can be no doubt that his unbelief was, at least, an error; and a great loss to him for the time. It was an error, not to have noted more exactly the many sayings of our Lord, by which, from time to time, He had been preparing His disciples to expect His real Resurrection:—not to trust their report, so many and so good as they were, who declared that they had seen Him, after He was risen. And it was a great loss, surely, to abide for a whole week in doubt and fear, while the rest were thankfully enjoying the unspeakable work of mercy which God had wrought for them. It was a great loss, to be separated, even for those few days, from the favoured company of Christ's believing people; from His Mother and the rest of the holy women, and from the Apostles whom He had breathed on, and sent, as His Father sent Him. And we may well imagine how S. Peter and S. John, and the rest of that faithful and affectionate company, must have grieved and prayed for him during that week; how they must have rejoiced, when, on the second Lord's Day, our Saviour made His appearance again, and graciously quieted S. Thomas' doubting mind, making the

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whole eleven again to be one happy and believing company.

But if S. Thomas, whose heart was good and true, lost so much by indulging his doubts for a week, what are we to think of those among ourselves, who are, in a much worse sense, unbelieving? How earnestly ought we to pray for them, and to watch ourselves, that we do and say nothing which may help to keep them in their miserable condition! I fear that there are many such: many who, for one reason or another, do not believe what they swore in Baptism to believe. Our Saviour, as you heard last Sunday, warned us, that there would be many such: in that He pronounced that man especially blessed, whosoever should not stumble and be offended in Him. And truly, though we all profess and call ourselves Christians, yet if men will open their eyes, and really attend to what is going on around them, they cannot help seeing that the air is full of unbelief. I do not mean that we often hear Christ and His Gospel openly denied and scoffed at: but that almost all people so speak and behave, as if they did not believe the main point, which the Creed was intended to remind them of. That point is, their own condition as Christians: that they are by Baptism taken out of the world, and brought into the kingdom of God: that they are in a high, a heavenly, a supernatural state, differing from that of such as are not Christians, somewhat in the same way as that, in which the Jews of old differed from all other nations; that they and we in short are the very people, of whom such great astonishing unspeakable things are spoken everywhere in God's book. This is what people do not believe:

they believe that God made them ; that they are fallen through Adam's sin ; that Christ redeemed them on the Cross by His own Blood ; and they are bold to promise themselves pardon and joy through Him : but they do not really believe, that they are so near Him already, as the Testament and the Catechism say. Their scruples therefore and unbelief are in some respects not unlike those of S. Thomas ; he knew of Christ's Death, but could not yet receive His Resurrection ; and we, while we somehow trust in His Death, are apt to forget that we are partakers of His Life, and are therefore bound, and enabled, to follow His steps.

Why did S. Thomas not believe ? and why are so many of us Christians unable to realise their true condition and privileges ? It is much the same reason in both cases. Our own senses, our own experiences, do not confirm what we are called on to believe. S. Thomas was told by his fellow-disciples that they had seen the Lord, but his timid spirit was not content with their report : he wanted to see Him his own self, to see His Wounds, and not only to see, but to feel them : then, he said he could believe, but not otherwise. So we Christians are taught in the Catechism that we are "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," but we do not see it, nor feel it : we see and feel the same as unbaptized people do. The world is about us, as it is about them, with its wants and pains and cares and pleasures ; and there is in too many of us an evil heart of unbelief, a sullen obstinate spirit, to whisper, "Seeing is believing ; and you do not see the things which Clergymen and good books so

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positively tell you of; why then need you trouble yourself much about them? They say you are in the kingdom of heaven, but you do not find or feel the difference: why then need you attend to them?" Then the Evil one helps our corrupt hearts to reason with us: and so it comes to pass that Christians go on for ten, twenty, forty, sixty years, living like heathens, and yet take it as a matter of course: they are not ashamed, they scarce care to deny or excuse themselves: they think they are no saints, and what better could be expected of them? If they could see with their eyes such things as the Apostles saw, heaven opened, the dead raised, all sorts of miracles wrought, then perhaps, they think they should believe: but as it is, they do not, and cannot. They walk by sight, not by faith: and see, what they lose by it.

First, they lose all the blessing and benefit of strict watching and serious thought, good Christian resolution in the morning, and good and true Christian self-examination at night. Only consider what high and noble rules a Christian would set himself to walk by, all through the day, who in earnest believed that he was even now in the kingdom of heaven, and that he could do all things through Christ strengthening him. How fervently, how reverently, would he cast himself down on his knees to say his prayers! How full would his heart be, on rising up from those prayers, of the unspeakable importance of all that he said and did! How thrilling to his mind would be the thought, "I shall hear of all this again at the last Day; it is all written in God's everlasting record; it will make a difference to me through all

eternity, it will help either to blot my name out of the Book of Life, or to make it shine brighter and brighter there!" How certain would he feel, even in his loneliest hours, that thousands of awful beings were watching him! How would he tremble to let his eyes wander after wickedness, who recollected that the All-seeing Eye was ever watching him through the cloud, as an anxious and strict parent watches a child! How would he turn away his ears from hearing of evil, who never forgot in his morning prayers, that all words, even the idlest, are heard in heaven: and that the words of Christian people especially are there noted down! But all such thoughts come seldom and languidly into the mind, which believes not its high privileges. Such a person may have good intentions; he may wish in a manner to do right, but he cannot have such a heart to keep and practise the whole Will of God, as he can, who knows that God Himself, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, has come to him, and is making His abode with him. And therefore we, for the most part, practise such poor and cold obedience; therefore we go on from day to day, from year to year, from Christmas to Christmas, from youth to old age, from the cradle to the grave, with little or no improvement. Therefore self-denial is so little thought of, and people think to be holy without it. Therefore so many of Christ's little ones grow up, and go through the world, and pass away into eternity, mere beginners, mere children in goodness; and many alas! fall away altogether, and go to their account with grievous sin on their heads, scarce knowing that it is grievous.

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Thus it is, that our want of faith spoils our good resolutions and self-examinations: and you will easily understand how it spoils our prayers too. The true Christian prayer is such as S. Paul describes: "We," of ourselves, "^a know not what we should pray for, as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." All is earnestness; all, seriousness; all, anxiety: the heart is full of eternal things: it sinks down, overpowered, bewildered and oppressed by the greatness of the matter, on which it is employed: the whole man, body and soul, lies, as it were, prostrate in God's presence, and says the words which he has learned of God's Church, well knowing that their meaning is far above him, yet hoping to be heard according to that meaning, it not being himself that speaks, but the Spirit of his most loving Father that speaketh in him. This is S. Paul's account of praying like a Christian. If our prayers are not such as this, depend upon it the great reason is, our want of faith. He, to Whom we speak in prayer, is out of sight; we see not, nor feel immediately the benefit of our prayers: Christ does not at once open His blessed Wounds, the means of our salvation, to be seen and understood by us: therefore we will not really believe; and because we do not really believe, we do not really pray. We only say prayers, without any strong endeavour to mean what we say: and too many are tempted even to give up the outward exercise. Is it not so, that, upon self-examination, not a few of us would have to confess, that they say fewer prayers now than they used in time past; that

^a Rom. viii. 26.

they have left off one or more devotional exercises or godly readings, which used to be a part of their day's work? And how should this be, but for want of faith? It may be, you saw not any outward and visible blessing come down, in return to your prayer, and so you left off praying. Except the sight and sound which you longed for, was vouchsafed you, you would not or could not believe.

Examine yourself, again, I beseech you, as to your thoughts of Holy Baptism. You think, of course, it were wrong to go without it: it would be breaking Christ's plain commandment, and bringing down His sore judgment upon you. It would be separating that child, so far, from the company of the faithful. So far is plain, in the most ordinary, the lowest way of thinking: and therefore the most ordinary, the lowest sort of Christians do not willingly suffer their children to remain unbaptized. But the Prayer-book teaches far more than this. Do you believe that *more*? Do you believe that when you were baptized you were really "made a member of Christ and a child of God;" that you were "born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost;" that you "were justified and sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God?" If you really believe this, of course you will remember your Baptism very often. You will be for ever calling yourself to account, lest you lose the high place, in which you have been set. As a miser would visit his hoarded treasure, as one who had a tender flower to nurse would look after it every morning, so will you look after your baptis-

^b 1 Cor. vi. 11.

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mal treasure, that it may prove treasure in heaven. You will cherish and water the sacred plant, which the Lord of the vineyard has entrusted to your keeping. If any of us do no such thing: if we do not earnestly remember our Baptism in our prayers: if we are not continually striving to preserve or recover the grace then bestowed upon us, the good thing, then committed to our charge: is it not plain that in reality we do not believe in Baptismal grace? *We see* no difference between a baptized and an unbaptized child: we cannot understand, how there should be such a difference: and not seeing nor understanding, we will not believe; and not believing, we will not watch ourselves with the scrupulous care, which faith would cause us to practise. We love to take evil liberties, and we are ready enough to excuse these liberties by fancying that we have not grace to do better. It comes into our minds, as to the Jews of old, that we are but as the heathen; and so we think that we shall not have so heavy an account to give. Alas! for the day, when, too late for reformation, such persons will have it made plain to them, that a bad Christian cannot be as a heathen: that light and grace must make the sins committed against them far worse in God's sight.

Of course it is only natural, that such as are unbelieving in respect of holy Baptism, because they cannot see or understand its inward grace, should be unbelieving in respect of the other Blessed Sacrament also: that they should account it a mere sign, and think they may be just as good without it.

Or again, that they should refuse to see God's merciful and righteous Hand in the special provi-

dences which befall themselves and others: afflictions coming in such time and manner, as that faith plainly shews them to be judgements for sin; or respite and deliverance coming unexpectedly and suddenly, evidently to give them more time for repentance and amendment: Joseph's brethren, on the point of being made slaves in Egypt: or Pharaoh raised up, that he might let Israel go. To slight such warnings is a very great step in faithlessness indeed: yet I fear it is by no means uncommon, especially when people are accounted sensible, and think they can easily make out earthly and visible reasons for things.

These are the ways of carnal skill and wisdom: may they ever be far from us and from all, for whom we are bound to pray! God grant us henceforth the minds of little children, the happiness of open, confiding minds, which believe, because they love, and readily see His tokens in everything, because they are not yet blinded by the love of His enemy, the world! May we never cease to think much of His Sacraments, never begin to dispute His teaching because we cannot understand it! May we go through life with the blessing of those "who have not seen, and yet have believed!"

SERMON IV.

PRIVILEGES OF MARTYRDOM.

S. STEPHEN'S DAY.

Ps. cxvi. 15.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints.”

LIFE is naturally the dearest thing we have; as the Evil spirit one day said of holy Job, “^aSkin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life.” Therefore, even by the judgement of nature, they who part willingly with their lives, in a good and holy cause, are thought very much of; their death is precious in men's sight. They seem to have done the very most they could do; and there is a disposition in all men to honour and reward them accordingly; if, indeed, anything that our fellow creatures can do for us after our death can be called a reward.

Hence the honours paid in all ages and nations, to the memories and families of those who have died fighting for their king and country. To all other

^a Job ii. 4.

merits they add this, that they shew themselves brave, and above minding bodily pain and danger ; which is a kind of excellency that all persons, even the worst, can hardly choose but admire.

And thus it has come to pass that persons, of very bad and unchristian minds in other respects, have yet been unable to refrain from admiring the martyrs of Christ ; those citizens of the holy city, and subjects of the heavenly kingdom, who have, at various times, laid down their lives for the honour of their eternal King, Christ Jesus, and the enlargement of their better country, the Church.

Now as all those feelings of ours, which are truly natural, have commonly some foundation of truth and right in them, so it is certain that this particular feeling, admiration for those who lay down their lives for Christ's sake, is greatly encouraged and sanctioned from above. The Church of Christ, from the beginning, not without the secret teaching of Christ's Spirit, ever paid especial honour to the martyrs of Christ. They accounted martyrdom to be that baptism, of which our Lord and Saviour spoke, when He said, He had still "^b a baptism to be baptized with," besides that which He had long ago received from S. John ; and that He was greatly "straitened," pressed in spirit, until that other baptism was accomplished. They thought He was speaking of His own death ; one may say, His own Martyrdom, for He died as a witness to the truth : they thought He was speaking of it as of a baptism, not in water, but in blood ; and as such a baptism they ever esteemed the violent deaths of the holy martyrs and men of God,

^b S. Luke xii. 50.

who, from time to time, laid down their lives, in those days of persecution, for the testimony of God and of Jesus Christ.

Concerning such, the sentence of the Church was, that, if they died without having yet received the outward and visible sign of Baptism, water in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, yet they were undoubtedly partakers of the spiritual grace: their so laying down their lives for Christ would be to them “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.” In a word, the common sentence of the Church concerning them was such as the following, which I take from one of the greatest and most renowned Fathers: “Whosoever, not having received the laver of regeneration, dies for confessing Jesus Christ, it availeth them as much for the remission of sins, as if they were washed in the sacred fountain of Baptism.” And our Lord Himself countenances this opinion, when He says, “he that confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven.”

Again, the Church was used, from very early times, to pay especial honour to the memories of the martyrs, by visiting their tombs, and there building chapels, where they celebrated the holy Feast of our Saviour's Body and Blood. Also they noted down, and diligently remembered, the days, on which their lives were taken from them, as we should the day on which any dear friends died. Only the Church called such days by the name of birthdays, reckoning martyrdom not a death, but a better birth to a brighter and purer life: like baptism, as I just now said.

‘ S. Matt. x. 32.’

For instance, they would call this day, S. Stephen's birthday; for was it not indeed birth to him, they thought, to be moved out of the darkness and helplessness of this present evil world into the light and joy of paradise? And, in further token of honour and of blissful communion, they used to recite the names of the martyrs in the Service of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when they came to that part, where Almighty God is thanked "for those who have departed this life in His faith and fear."

Such was the honour, in which the Church always held the noble army of Martyrs. And for doing so, there is much encouragement in Holy Scripture. S. Paul speaks of such death as a sacrifice; and declares the joy, with which he looked forward to partaking of it, as though it were an offering which would surely be well-pleasing to God. "⁠^d Though I be offered," says he, "though I be poured out as a drink-offering, on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation." He speaks as if, in some mysterious way, the blood of the martyrs was mingled with that of our Lord, the only true Atoning Sacrifice, so as that they should have an especial interest in Him.

And perhaps our Blessed Saviour Himself may seem to countenance this notion, when He says that all the righteous blood shed from the beginning of the world, from Abel to Zacharias, from the first page of the Old Testament to the last, should be required of that generation which crucified Him. Why so, except that the blood of the martyrs was in

^d Phil. ii. 17. i. 19.

a certain sense His Blood, so that, by murdering Him, they became guilty of it?

But of all the books of the New Testament, that which speaks most fully and expressly in praise of martyrdom is the last, the book of Revelations; which may be considered as the words of our glorified Lord, approving or condemning things, as they now go on in His Church. In those visions, over and over again, we find our Lord and His Angels giving all encouragement to those especially, who should, in any age of the Church, lay down their lives for His sake. “Be thou faithful,” He says, “unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

He unseals the book of His providence, and shews to His servant, under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. He gives us a glimpse of those happy spirits, at rest and in safe keeping, with the hope of coming to perfection after no long time. “White robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” Does it not sound, almost, as if the Almighty bore yet with the wicked world for the martyrs’ sake, as if it were one great object of His government over us here, to fulfil their number?

Again, in a certain vision of S. John’s, an Angel takes delight in pointing out to him, among the blessed saints in heaven, those especially, who had come out of the “great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the

* Rev. ii. 10.

† Ib. vi. 11.

Lamb.” Further on, the whole choir of Angels sing joyfully together in heaven the praises of the martyrs, calling them their brethren, as having overcome the Evil one “^s by the Blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, in that they loved not their lives unto the death.” Once more: in the vision of Christ’s reign of a thousand years, S. John saw “^h the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God,” living and reigning with their Lord; whereas “the rest of the dead lived not, until the thousand years were finished.”

Now, inasmuch as S. Stephen, the saint of this day, was the first of that noble army, the first Christian who sealed his faith in Christ with his blood; (for S. John the Baptist, though a martyr, could not be reckoned a Christian martyr, since he suffered before the kingdom of heaven was set up); one may naturally expect to find, in the account of S. Stephen’s death, some tokens of this peculiar favour, which our Lord has ever shewn to His martyrs; and we shall not be disappointed. The last hours of this brave and holy man were indeed visited with blessings, such as Angels might admire. As a kind of pledge and sign of the rest, it may seem as if his outward countenance was lit up with a holy brightness, not its own; like that of Moses when he came down from the mount: a brightness, which his very enemies took notice of. “ⁱ All that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel.” So S. Luke writes, in the manner of one who had been present, and saw what was going on. And as he received many things from S. Paul,

^s Rev. xii. 11.^h Ib. xx. 4, 5.ⁱ Acts vi. 15.

so he very likely received this; for S. Paul, we know, was then present: and one may well imagine, how the remembrance of that angelic countenance may have abode with him afterwards, and encouraged him in counting his own life but loss, could he offer it for the sake of Christ.

In the next place, consider whether the Lord did not shew Himself especially present with S. Stephen, by the power which he had, for a time, to keep silent those his outrageous adversaries, while, like his Divine Master, he taught them as one having authority. For I think it has been truly said, that S. Stephen's manner is more peremptory and judicial, more like that of our Blessed Lord in some of His most awful and threatening discourses, than the manner of any other prophet of the New Testament. He seems, no more than the Jewish prophets, to be speaking in his own person, but rather, throughout, to be merely uttering the message which God had put into his mouth.

And not only in this manner of his, but in many circumstances of his death, we may plainly discern such a resemblance of our Saviour in His Passion, as could not but have been providential; and being so, cannot but be considered as a mark of especial honour from God Almighty. This resemblance may be seen in the form of his trial before the High Priest; in the charge brought against him, of speaking disrespectfully of the Temple; in his committing his soul to Jesus Christ, ("Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!") as He had committed Himself to His Father with a verse out of the Psalms, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit;" finally, in his kneeling

down amid the showers of stones, and praying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," just as his Saviour, in the sharp agony of the Cross, had said, meekly, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But chiefly was the distinguishing favour of the Father and the Son shewn unto him, in that, when the trying moment was just coming on, and the fierce persecutors had begun to gnash upon him with their teeth, he looked stedfastly up into heaven, and saw it opened, and beheld, through the opening, "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God;" not sitting, as the Creed represents Him; not as a King, judging, but as an Advocate, pleading; "standing" to succour this His servant in his great extremity: and not him only, but, in him, all who should at any time suffer for the Name of their Lord.

That vision, at that moment, was the seal of Christ's supporting Presence, which He has thenceforth vouchsafed to His martyrs, in every age of His Church. As this day's collect says, "They have stedfastly looked up to heaven, and have beheld, by faith, the glory which is to be revealed; and that, as being full of the Holy Ghost." The faith and patience of the martyrs are by special grace from that Blessed Spirit. He opens their dying eyes to behold their Saviour, and moves their failing voices to pray for their enemies. What surer token of the Father's favour, what brighter earnest of life eternal than the sight of our Lord, and the fulness of His Holy Spirit; both of which, we see, are peculiarly the portion of martyrs? "Precious" indeed "in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

And perhaps we should not be very wrong, if we added to these instances of especial favour, the effect which S. Stephen's death appears to have had on the young man, Saul, who was "^k standing by, and consenting to his death, and keeping the raiment of them that slew him." Not that the sight even of such a martyrdom had any power to convert Saul then; we know Who had reserved that work for Himself, and by what an astonishing miracle He brought it to pass: yet it plainly appears, that the recollection of S. Stephen's death, though it could not convert S. Paul, had no small virtue to encourage him, when converted; to make him take pleasure in infirmities and persecutions; to keep him humble; to confirm him in self-denial. It was evidently a sting to his conscience, and a spur to his exertions; by what we once find him confessing in words to our Saviour; "When the blood of Thy martyr, Stephen, was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

One thing is here plainly taught us; that we never must despair of the Church: never at all of the Church Catholic; never of the Church in any particular country, as long as Christ shall crown it with suffering, especially with martyrdom, in His cause. It seemed, at the time, as if Stephen's death had done no good whatever to the young man, Saul; as if it would only serve to increase his condemnation; and yet, we see, it served to increase his glory. Nor will it be known, till the great day, how many more souls have been brought to their Saviour in consequence of that increased zeal in S. Paul, which may

^k Acts xxii. 20.

be put to S. Stephen's account. Again I say, dear and precious, "right dear in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints," that witness Him.

But it is one thing to perceive this as a scriptural truth, and to admire it all as beautiful and noble, beyond all thought of man; and it is quite another thing to practise it; to carry it home into our own hearts and lives. The one comes of itself; the other is a great and rare grace.

And how is the thought, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the martyrdom of His saints;"—how is this to be realized in our hearts and lives, and, in our quiet times, when no martyrdom is going on? Why, in this way: when we think steadily of martyrdom, we cannot but perceive, how very unlike our natural view of what will make us happy is to the view of the saints of God; of those, who, being full of the Holy Ghost, saw heaven opened, and who could not be mistaken as to the way of happiness. The very things we most shudder at; shame, pain, want, labour, most intense in their kinds, and the bitterest death; they willingly endured, nay, passionately longed after, for Christ's sake. Is it not rather alarming, to find our judgement and affections so very unlike theirs? Should we not do well to try and get a better mind; to form and cherish in ourselves, by the gracious aid of God's Holy Spirit, something like a spirit of martyrdom? It cannot be done all at once, but it may be done by degrees, if we will humbly and patiently try.

It may be done, if we will seriously set ourselves Christian rules of self-denial, and silently practise ourselves in them every day: if we make the mind

and conduct of the holy martyrs our particular study, and endeavour to think deeply, and not just to feel warmly, upon them: if we seek the Holy Ghost, of which they were full, in all those ways of the Church, which we know they delighted in: if we tame our stubborn wills in things which seem trifling, and lay ourselves out for others the more earnestly, by how much what we have to do may cost us more trouble, and seem to bring least reward in this present world.

This is that practice of the life of the saints and martyrs, which may best help us, by God's mercy, to practise their death also, should He, by any turn of His providence, call us, unworthy as we are, to die for Him.

SERMON V.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WITNESSING A HOLY DEATH.

S. STEPHEN'S DAY.

ISA. lvii. 1.

"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, and none considereth that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."

THE Festival Day of the first of Christ's martyrs seems naturally to bring with it two great lessons: two very serious subjects of meditation. One of these is, the privileges of martyrdom itself, and how even ordinary Christians in quiet times may so train themselves by the grace of God, as not to be entirely destitute of all part in those privileges. This I have considered in a former year, when we were keeping the memory of the holy S. Stephen. The other very serious subject which the Day suggests is this: what should be the mind of those whom God's providence calls in any way to be witnesses of a martyrdom; to be present, when His saints lay down their lives for Him. And this last, in which we ourselves who are now living, may seem to be

more concerned than in the other, I should wish to be, this day, the subject of our thoughts and self-examination.

I say, we are more concerned in this than in the other; because, unhappily, we are not generally in such a state of religious improvement; we do not so love and fear God; as that we should be able, perhaps without presumption; to aspire to any of the glories and privileges of Christ's martyrs for ourselves. But we are all, at more or less distance, witnesses of their faith and patience: the duty therefore of such witnesses is directly and immediately our duty, and we must answer for it before the Almighty Judge.

Some people indeed seem to think their own condition very different from what it would have been, if they had actually been present at a martyrdom. They are apt to think, if they had lived in those early days of the Church, when people were to be seen in all countries ready to lay down their lives for Jesus Christ, surely they should have been better Christians themselves, than now they are. If we had been present, e. g. when S. Stephen was stoned, we are ready to imagine, it would have had a good effect on us, and turned our thoughts away from the shadows of this world to that JESUS Whom he saw "standing at the Right hand of God." We could not, we think, have resisted an example so touching, so holy. Had we heard him praying for his enemies, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," we think it must have made us kinder and more forgiving for the time to come, more ashamed to indulge any sort of spite or anger. Had we seen how sweetly he

“fell asleep,” amid their outrageous curses and blows, commending his spirit to his Saviour: we flatter ourselves, that that remembrance at least would have helped to keep us in order in our anxious cares and wild pleasures and too eager pursuit of the things of this world. Thus we imagine, and account ourselves in some sort excusable for being as we are, because we have no such glorious examples of martyrdom passing before our own eyes, but can only read of them in books, and hear of them in Church.

But there is a sentence of our Saviour's, which ought to be a great caution to us against such thoughts as these. “^aWoe unto you,” He says to the Pharisees, “for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.” Our Lord's meaning here was, not surely to blame them for really respecting the memories of the holy prophets, but to blame them for doing it hypocritically: for doing it, while at the same time they were persecuting Him, of Whom the prophets prophesied. He reproves them, telling them that their words, when they called the slayers of the prophets, “their fathers,” were true in more senses than they themselves intended: they were their children, not only in blood, but also in bearing their likeness: in setting themselves against God and His true servants. It were better that they truly repented and turned to God, before they pretended to feel such particular love and reverence for the saints of God.

^a S. Matt. xxiii. 29, 30.

And besides this caution given by our Saviour, there is something which takes place every day, which ought, one would think, to convince us at once, how very unworthy we are of beholding with our eyes the blessed death of a martyr. It is that, which Isaiah takes notice of in the verse which was read to you for the text. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, and none considereth that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Words which in the first instance, no doubt, were spoken prophetically of our Saviour and His saints. For He is *the* True "Righteous" and Just One, and His Apostles were the most loving and "merciful" among men. But yet the words belong also to the case of every good Christian, every baptized one who keeps his vow, every member of Christ who is just and merciful like Him. When such men die and are taken away out of sight, be the manner of their death what it may, they are a kind of martyrs, witnesses to the truth of God. The very fact of their dying shews that God "has some better" thing in store for them: and for us, so far as we tread in their blessed steps. For He would never permit His faithful ones to suffer so much, and be so early cut off, were it not His purpose to make it up to them by an exceeding great reward hereafter. In one sense indeed all men, the best and worst, heathens and Christians alike, are, by dying, martyrs i. e. witnesses of the Truth of God: they force us to see how short our life is, how soon gone, what a mere worthless shadow to look back upon, when it is gone. Every death-bed, so far, teaches the same that a martyrdom does: but the

death-bed of a faithful and obedient Christian teaches (besides,) the power of faith and obedience to stand against all these terrors, and supply a rod and staff to support us through the dark valley. There are few of us probably, at least except the very young, but have had, sometime or other, an opportunity of beholding something of this kind. God's providence has allowed us to be by, when some sick friend or neighbour has testified his faith by kind and thoughtful actions, for Christ's sake, when his pain and danger was heaviest: or by wakening up, when he seemed to be insensible, to listen to the intercessions of the Church, and say with his last breath, "Let us call on God Almighty:" or by some other undoubted token of love, or patience, or humility, or charity, when he was, or seemed to be, near his last end. Such beds of death and of anguish it is a great privilege to come near: a talent for which we must give a strict account: they are in a degree like so many instances of martyrdom; for in all of them more or less is willingly and thankfully borne for the sake of Christ, and for the testimony of His Truth. If then we have had opportunities of being near such bright examples as these, and have failed to profit by them, what reason have we to think, that we should have profited by the glorious and painful deaths of the old martyrs, had we been near them at the time? Our own near relations perhaps died, heartily forgiving those who had wronged them; and we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive: what good would it have done us to hear S. Stephen praying for his murderers? It would only have increased our condemnation. We have perhaps been by, when some Christian neigh-

bour, enduring the most fearful agonies, has yet borne them with all patience, acknowledging that they were far less than what he deserved; and yet we have not learned patience; every little disappointment and sorrow frets us. What if we had seen Isaiah sawn asunder, or the courageous mother and sons in the book of Maccabees, or S. Stephen when the stones were being hurled on him, or our Lord Himself on His Cross, that bed of unspeakable suffering? Why should we think that these sights would have done us much more good, than what we have beheld and slighted?

Or suppose again that we have seen, or known of, a good Christian departing this life in great poverty and distress, as far as this world is concerned; deprived of his best aids, and disappointed of his most reasonable hopes, yet keeping up a thankful heart, and joy in God; and suppose that, for all this, we have not learned so much faith as to lean on Him when our earthly hopes fail us, but rather to give ourselves up to repining or to drown our grief in base or riotous enjoyments; little good indeed would it have been to such as we are, had we beheld Christ's first martyr kneeling alone in the midst of his enemies, no hope, no friend on earth, but forgetting all earthly things and looking joyfully up to heaven, and "by faith beholding the glory that shall be revealed." S. Stephen's death would be no more to us than the holy deaths and patient sorrows of good men whom we have known and slighted. We see how it was with the Jews who were standing by at the time; the greater part were filled with rage and gnashed upon him with their teeth. Even such a thoughtful

earnest person as S. Paul was not, that we find, moved at all to repentance by what he saw in S. Stephen's death: rather he went on persecuting the Church more and more violently, till Christ Himself called him. We who have been long ago called by Christ, if we will not mind the good examples which we find in our daily life, and among our own acquaintance, in vain is it for us to dream that, if we had lived among those early martyrs, we should have been at all more earnest in our repentance.

Wherefore laying aside, once for all, every imagination of that kind, let us rather set ourselves to improve to the very uttermost of our power the privileges with which God favours us from time to time, when He lets us see in some good relation or friend, how affliction, and pain, and death may be borne, injuries forgiven, and the world despised. As we stand by the death-bed of such an one, or hear the bells giving notice of his departure, let us seriously consider what the prophet tells us, "That the righteous is taken away from evil:" from out of the way of that great evil, which is to come upon all the earth, when the fire of God's anger shall break out and consume it in the last day. Then it shall be seen, how blessed was the lot of those who were taken away in their righteousness and mercy: how quiet and safe the heavenly peace they entered into, their "rest on their beds" in Paradise, "each one walking in his uprightness." Then, when the saints which had gone before shall come again with our Lord in the air, and those yet living on the earth shall be caught up in the clouds to meet them, the wicked, on the contrary, and the wilful perverters of God's

^b Is. lvii. 2.

law, and despisers of the gracious opportunities which He affords, will feel the world which they have loved burning under their feet, and will wish in vain for one chance more, one more warning, such as may give them time for some little repentance at least, before they are cast away. Let us use ourselves, when we think on the faithful departed, when we look down into their graves, when we miss them out of their accustomed places and resorts, whether of amusement, of business, or of devotion: let us at such times use ourselves to consider seriously, "When I meet again with this my deceased brother, or sister, or friend, where and how will it be? His soul, we hope, is in paradise, but where will mine then be, if I make light of this, as of so many former warnings? There will be no shelter then between us and our God: nothing to protect us, but the shadow of the Cross of Christ: if we have forfeited that by our sins, fearful indeed to us will be the day, when this our brother and we shall meet again, the more fearful for our slighting this call which God makes on us by his death, as we have slighted so many former judgements and mercies."

If we used ourselves to such thoughts as these, whenever the hour of a good man's death comes on within our knowledge, to put us in mind of the day of judgement: we should have the more reason to hope that the glorious example of the martyrs would not be lost upon us, were our lot cast, by God's providence upon times like theirs: we might hope for continued communion and fellowship with them now in their state of assured hope; and to be crowned when they are, hereafter, and to sit at their feet in their state of perfection and glory.

SERMON VI.

S. JOHN, A PATTERN OF TRUSTING, CHILDLIKE FAITH.

S. JOHN'S DAY.

S. JOHN xix. 35.

“And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.”

S. JOHN, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the favoured one who leaned on His breast at supper, had very plainly this among other marks of true love for Christ : that he was content and willing to believe whatever was to his Master's glory, though the proof of it were not so strong, as we in our infirmity might desire. This is plainly, as far as it goes, a sign of true love ; to ask no questions of the Beloved, but agree at once to whatever our own heart tells us will be doing His will and promoting His glory. That such was S. John's disposition is seen in many instances : particularly in that famous one of his believing our Lord concerning His Resurrection, before he had yet seen Him risen. He went into the tomb, and saw the shroud and the napkin, lying carefully apart from each other, and from the rest of the grave-clothes :

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and it came at once into his mind, that our Lord's words concerning His Resurrection must have come true in some sense or another. "He saw and believed," though as yet he understood not what the Scriptures say of that subject : and obtained for himself a portion of the comfortable words, "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed."

A little before this, S. John had shewn the same loving and courageous mind, by being ready, alone to turn back and to follow our Saviour, when the rest of the disciples forsook Him and fled. S. John only, with S. Peter accompanying him, followed, not only to the High Priest's palace, but to the very Cross. And a little after, when he had joined S. Peter and some other of the disciples for a day's fishing, their old employment: when Christ shewed Himself, standing on the shore, S. John was the first to know that it was Christ; judging most likely by some such minute marks, as none but intimate friends are apt to take notice of. He did not trouble himself about long reasonings, but said at once, "It is the Lord." He knew Him Whom he loved by a kind of instinct, as little children know their mothers and cling to them. While some, as S. Thomas, were doubting and fearing, imagining that what appeared was too good to be true, and requiring strict proof, even to put their hands on the marks of our Lord's Wounds; and while others, like S. Peter, were eager and restless, and still wanting to do more than they were bidden, to shew their love and obedience to our Lord: S. John's way rather was, in quietness and assurance to go on, watching for any signs which our Lord might give of His Presence or His Will, accepting

them at once just as they were, not at all inquiring why there were not more of them, or clearer, or more overpowering, but in faith doing the thing which he was bidden, and waiting to see what would come of it. This was his way ; and he was the beloved disciple ; he leaned on Jesus' Bosom ; he was counted so near to Him by the rest, that when they had questions to ask of Him, and hardly knew how to ask them, they requested S. John to be their messenger, and make the enquiry of our Lord. Simple faith, pure love, childlike obedience, seem here to be recommended, as bringing us nearer to our Lord, than the most earnest desire of knowledge, or the most anxious endeavour to be useful, and do great things.

It is further to be observed, that S. John always writes like a person who was not only himself of this trusting mind, but also expected those to whom he was writing to proceed by the same rule themselves, in their judgement of Divine things : or rather I should say his manner is such as if he had never thought of any one receiving Christ's Truth in any other way : or as if he were pouring himself out naturally, and could not if he would express himself otherwise, whether the hearer would receive it or no. He does not reason, like S. Paul, and bring verses out of the Old Testament, nor does he (if I may so call it) moralize in the way of S. James, with parables drawn from things in sight, or from matters going on in common life : neither does he exhort, like S. Peter, in a fervent flowing way, as if he thought he could never say enough : but S. John's manner is altogether perhaps more *fatherly* than either of the others'. He never reasons, but bears witness : as if

a parent should say to his children, "Depend upon it, so and so it is; I am older than you, and I assure you of it; and you will find it by experience true, bye and bye; but in the mean time you must go by my experience; you must put faith in Christ speaking through me, as I trusted in Him speaking to us Apostles directly, when He was among us on earth." This sort of authority S. John claims in the very first words of his epistle, and he keeps it up all the way through. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and which our hands have handled, of the Word of Life (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear record, and shew unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us)—that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you: that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." You see, he expects us to receive what he teaches in the same kind of way, as he had himself received what our Lord taught, with perfect faith, not with restless enquiry; and if you examine his epistle from beginning to end, you will find that it all speaks to us in the same tone. And it is just the same in his Gospel: as, for example, quite at the end of it: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." And in the verse just now read to you for the text, out of the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel, giving an account of the piercing of Christ's Side, and the flowing out of Blood and Water, he adds; "He that saw it bare record, and

his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." He expects you to believe him, as he believed Christ, and to take his word without further enquiry: because he is sure that his word is Christ's word, and he knows for certain, even by happy experience, how good and blessed a thing it is, to take Christ's word and act upon it at once; not waiting to understand things, to have all difficulties answered, or to see all your way beforehand.

This is perhaps the happiest frame of mind, as concerning the truths of God, which a person can be in, in this world; to be sure that his witness is true, and to be ever busy in making known that truth, according to his place and station, to others; out of a single-hearted desire that they should believe. Yet even this, among frail men, is not without abuse: nor is it very hard to understand, where the abuse and danger is. Persons who know that they say true, that others may believe, are apt to be impatient and angry, when those others prove obstinate: as S. John himself, when he saw some one casting out devils in Christ's Name, would have forbidden him, because he followed not with the Apostles: and again, when certain Samaritans refused to receive our Lord into their village, S. James and S. John were for calling down fire from heaven to consume them. In both these instances, our Saviour, it seems, rebuked His own beloved disciple, telling him, in the one case, not to forbid a person who was not against them, however outwardly he might seem not to be with them: in the other case, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of"—ye know not what gen-

tleness and patience the Gospel which you are to preach requires, how its rule will almost always be, to put off mortal punishments, till men come to the other world: nor on the other hand, while you are so indignant at the unbelievers, are you quite aware what is passing in your own hearts; some part of this zeal of yours is of a more earthly spirit than you think; more mixed up with anger and revenge, less like the pure zeal of the Angels. This was in the early days of the holy Apostle's discipleship. After the Blessed Comforter had come down, and joined them entirely to Jesus Christ, we scarcely read of their doing or saying anything, that agreed not with the Spirit they were truly of: but this their early mistake is set down, for a lesson to true and dutiful believers in all times, not to expect too much at first from others, nor to be either disheartened or angry, if they find people far too indifferent to their charitable warnings.

And as persons of true zeal and charity stand in need of this caution, so again it should be well understood, that not all have a right to argue as S. John does, even for the very truth itself: not all who any how believe it, have a right to say "that they know their record of it is true," and to expect others to believe it on their word. "The Holy Church throughout all the world" has a right to say this, for she is near indeed to our Lord; she, like S. John, leans, as it were, on His Bosom. And other teachers have a right to say so, in such measure as they too, by dutiful perseverance, have learned to enter into the mind of Christ, and to know, by a sort of heavenly instinct, what He would have done and what left undone. It is a knowledge which depends not on quick parts

or much learning, but wholly and entirely on dutifulness, humility, and obedience. When persons keep the commandments constantly, then God's gracious and Holy Spirit enters more and more into their hearts, and gives them light and strength to understand and keep them better: and they by degrees obtain a kind of authority, a right to speak, almost like a prophet, on questions of Christian duty.

As to all the rest of us, who, instead of confirmed goodness and constant love of Christ, live but in different degrees of faint and imperfect repentance, surely we cannot be too thankful, when God's merciful providence in any way brings within our reach men, who have learned wisdom by long obedience to His commandments: men who "know that they say true, and who say it to us, that we may believe." As far as we are to choose our advisers, these are the guides we ought to choose, and not those who are most remarkable for wisdom and sharpness of understanding, or who are in credit for much learning, even in the words of Holy Scripture. For our Lord's promise is^a, "If any man is willing to do God's Will, he shall know of My teaching:" therefore we ought in the first place to hearken after *their* opinion who we know, fear God most, and have served Him best from their youth.

Especially, does it seem fit that youthful inexperienced persons should look up to others in this way, and be very thankful when they can find such to guide them: I mean, of course, subject to the directions of the Holy Catholic Church; for she is the great guide of all, and no man, however seemingly

^a S. John vii. 17.

good, will be safe to trust and follow, who does not obey her directions. But where she has left things open, there nature herself, as well as Scriptures, seems to say, “^bBe thou continually with a godly man,” open thy mind to the wise and to such as fear God : for “^che that is spiritual judgeth all things.”

All young persons, almost, require to be taught this submission; but those surely above the rest, who are inclined to dispute much about religion : who feel as if they could not refrain from uttering the words which rise to their lips, even on the most sacred subjects. Well would it be for such, and often it would be well for others too, if they would set themselves a rule to keep silence, and listen to the voice of better, though, to outward seeming, not wiser men ; if they would believe such, knowing them to speak truth, though they have not a word to allege for their advice, but merely a charitable certainty, that it is good advice ; rather than be carried away by the abler and better-sounding words of more ingenious men.

When they want to reason and dispute, and their Christian friends bid them pray and be quiet ; that is their trial : if they then deny themselves, there is reason to hope they are in a good way ; if they will yet go on arguing, like persons wise in their own conceit, “^dthere is more hope of a fool than of them.”

E.g. a grave and good aged person will sometimes warn the younger ones with authority, how very dangerous are such and such beginnings of mischief, which appear to them mere trifles, innocent liberties. Or he will reprove you for doubting and arguing at all, when you are directed this way or that by lawful

^b Ecclus. xxxvii. 12. ^c 1 Cor. ii. 16. ^d Prov. xxvi. 12.

authority : by your parents, suppose, your pastor or master ; by the rules of the Church, or by the law of the land. In such cases we are not to doubt, that the voice of our elders and Christian advisers is the voice of the Most High, directing us how to proceed : we need make no scruple, then, in surrendering up our own wishes and imaginations, how good and pleasant soever they might seem, and in walking the way of the commandments, so pointed out. Thus should we learn upon trust, as little children do of their parents ; and, submitting ourselves continually to better men, become at last better ourselves.

Thus even from him, the beloved disciple, might we, by persevering obedience, learn so much and so constantly, that the spirit of his discourses, true love and holy serenity, may, in some small measure, appear in our lives ; and we, though not leaning on Jesus' Bosom (who dare venture to hope for such a place as that ?) may yet hope to see Him as He is, and sit down with Him, at what distance soever, in the heavenly Feast.

SERMON VII.

WISHING FOR CHRIST'S COMING.

S. JOHN'S DAY.

REV. xxii. 20.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

THE festival, kept by the Church to-day, is that of the great Apostle and Evangelist whom Christ honoured with especial friendship; S. John. And the day offers a good opportunity for considering another great privilege, with which God has enriched His true Church, over and above those, which have been noticed on former Saints' days; I mean her bearing continual testimony of the second Coming of our Lord and Saviour.

The spirit of prophecy, poured out upon the Church, is a sure sign of her being God's own; for God only, as you well know, can enable frail and ignorant man to foretell things to come. He did so abundantly, by Daniel and Isaiah, and the other prophets of the Jewish Church; and when the time came to set up the Christian Church, then again the Spirit of prophecy went abroad for her warning and comfort, as

her Divine Master had promised. For, just before He departed from His disciples, He assured them^a the Spirit of Truth would come, and guide them into all truth; and that He would shew them things to come.

This was fulfilled to many, if not all, the Apostles; but to none more remarkably than to S. John, the favoured disciple whom Jesus loved. He, being banished to a lonely island, "for the Word of God and the testimony of His truth," saw all those wonderful visions, which are related in the book of Revelations. Dark and difficult as most of that book is, thus much is plain to every reader; that it is in every part meant to glorify the Son of God. There is an eye, throughout, to the establishment of His glorious kingdom; and it ends, as you know, with His coming to judge the world, and to reward every man according to his works.

You see then that Almighty God, by giving to His Church the Revelation of S. John, has marked her to be His true Church, endowed with His prophetic Spirit according to His promise; and bearing witness, through all ages, to that which most concerns us to know: His fixed purpose of coming again, to call us to that strict account, which will determine our lot for ever.

The very last words of this prophecy, almost the last words of the New Testament; the farewell words, as it were, of the Holy Spirit, when He had finished the Book of God, are these which I just now read in the text; "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, Come, Lord

^a S. John xvi. 13.

Jesus." I say, these are, in a certain sense, the *farewell* words of the Holy Ghost. Having taught S. John to utter them, He sealed up the Divine Book, made an end of it, and left it with the Church, to see what use she would make of it. This makes the words doubly awful; but, indeed, they are awful enough in themselves.

For what can be more awful, than to hear our Lord and Saviour Himself speaking to us through His beloved Apostle and prophet, for the very last time? And what is the message, which He leaves sounding in our ears, would we but consent to open them and hearken unto Him? It is this; "Surely I come quickly: it will be no long time before I am here again, and every eye, the most unwilling, shall see Me." A fearful declaration indeed, to all those who have reason to think themselves enemies of Christ. But as to S. John, the friend of Christ, he receives it as the best news he could hear; he cannot refrain his earnest longings to have it so. "Amen, so be it," he breaks out: "even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

Now, here are two things to be considered, most proper for S. John's day. First, In what sense could it be said that our Lord was coming "quickly," seeing that now a good deal more than seventeen hundred years have passed, and He has not yet come again? Secondly, What sort of persons may reasonably join in the prayer of the beloved disciple, and express their delight in the certainty that the Judge of the world will soon be here?

Now, as to the first: the end of the world may be said to come quickly, in the sight of God, how

many years soever may pass, before the actual Day of Judgement. For in the sight of God, as S. Peter tells us, "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." What are to us long distances of time, are absolutely nothing at all to Him, Who is "^b the Same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He knows what eternity is; to Him, therefore, whatever takes place in time, whether sooner or later, appears close at hand.

It can never be so exactly with us: but in some very faint degree we may understand it, by considering how much shorter time seems to every one, as he grows older. A week or a fortnight, to a boy of ten years old, seems a very long space of time: to a grown-up person it seems very little, and the longer he has lived, the less he thinks of it. And thus, when we come to the eternal world, and look back on our time here, it will appear as nothing in comparison, and men will stand amazed at their own folly, in having thought so very much of what they now see was to last but for a moment. Turn this seriously over in your own mind, and you will in some sort understand, how the whole duration of the world may be truly called very short, and Christ said to come quickly, though a thousand generations were to pass, between S. John's prophecy and the end of the world.

Then, again, our Lord may be truly said to come quickly to each individual, because each individual will very soon die; and death, to him, will, after a sort, be the coming of his Lord. Death will turn him, helpless and alone, into the presence of the

^b Heb. xiii. 8.

dreadful Judge. Death will settle his place for ever; will take away from him all power of repenting, or doing any thing which may change the place prepared for him at the great day. He never will be able to cross the gulf, which separated the rich man from Abraham's bosom. Therefore, since you must die quickly, it may be truly affirmed that Christ will come to you quickly. The day of Judgement, if not in time, yet in thought, is the very next thing to the hour of death. For that very reason, above all others, death is so dreadful a thing to a sinner.

And yet there have always been some persons, who have rejoiced to think of the near approach of those great and awful things: persons, who, watching the signs of the times, and seeing all things draw to an end, have been able to enter into our Lord's meaning, when He bade them look up, and lift up their heads, because their redemption was drawing nigh. If you would know, what sort of persons these were; what sort of temper may lead a man, without irreverence or presumption, to rejoice in a thought so very awful; they were such persons as the Apostle S. John; and their prevailing tempers and dispositions were such as his; they were beloved and affectionate disciples of Jesus Christ.

Now when men are laid on the bed of sickness, especially if they have any great pain or sorrow of heart to endure, one shall often hear them wishing, that God would take them; that He would shorten their time, and remove them out of their misery, and the like. It would be well for such persons, if they would consider a little, what sort of people only

have reason to make such a prayer, before they allow themselves to make it.

Those who are really like S. John, may perhaps, without presumption, pray and wish that God would take them : as S. John in the text wishes and prays, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus." The Son of Man, S. John's own personal friend, having appeared to him from the heavenly world, was now about to close His Revelation, and to withdraw from His Apostle's sight, to His glorious place at His Father's right hand. What so natural, as that His favoured friend should earnestly long for His return, and express himself accordingly ? "Come, Lord Jesus."

But ordinary Christians, before they join in that prayer, especially if they are lying on a sick bed, or otherwise tempted to be fretful and impatient, should look to it, that they are endeavouring to resemble S. John in those parts of his character, which recommended him, as we may well believe, to our Saviour's especial friendship. Otherwise they may find, too late, that they have been wishing evil to themselves, in wishing the time of their probation shortened, and themselves hurried into that world, where no repentance can be : according to the saying of the prophet Amos, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord ! To what end is it for you ? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light."

Now one great point in S. John's character, a thing which our Lord Himself pronounced to be worthy of an especial blessing, was this : that without seeing he believed ; that is, his mind was affectionate and teachable ; not always restlessly seeking more and

^c Amos v. 18.

more light and knowledge, but rather bent, in the first place, upon practising to the best of his power what he already perceived to be right.

This disposition S. John shewed, when going into the sepulchre of our Lord, on the morning of His rising from the dead, he saw the linen clothes lie, in which our Saviour's blessed Body had been wrapped, and believed, at once, that He must be risen : whereas S. Peter and the other Apostles kept perplexing themselves at His not appearing to them. S. John, I say, saw the grave-clothes, and believed ; and thereby obtained a part in that blessing, which our Lord soon afterwards pronounced on all who should trust Him with their salvation in earnest, though they might not be exactly the best able to answer those who gainsay and make objections : " Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The words of this blessing describe, if I mistake not, a very material part of S. John's character. He was inclined to believe without seeing : to lean on our Lord, as a child leans on his parents, taking it for granted, that whatever they do is best, although as yet he cannot understand it, cannot perceive the reason of it. Endeavour in this respect to be converted, and to become as little children, and you have made a great step in imitating the beloved disciple.

But, if you have such a disposition, however much you may long to see your Master, you will not, on account of your own pain or vexation, pray to have your life shortened, or wish, in fretfulness, that God would release you. You will rather leave it in His hands, Who cannot fail to do the best for those who resemble the disciple whom He loved.

Another point in S. John's character was his courageous, adventurous disposition, in his Holy Master's service. It appears by the Gospels, that when the companions of our Lord and Saviour all forsook Him and fled, on the night He was betrayed, S. John was the first to recover himself: to follow Him even to the palace of the High Priest, to stand by Him even, and own Him for his Master, in His bitter sufferings on the Cross. For by the Cross of Jesus were standing His Mother, and the disciple whom He loved; and He said to the one, "Behold thy mother," and to the other, "Behold thy son." Such was S. John's great and signal reward for his faithful affection, in keeping close to His Master through the worst. His Master trusted him with the care of His blessed Mother.

And it may be observed, that although S. John's own Gospel gives us the account of these things, he relates them without any kind of boasting, for he does not even mention his own name, but simply calls himself "the other disciple, whom Jesus loved" especially, as He loved S. Peter. Here is a beautiful example for Christian penitents and sick persons. They may see by S. John's modesty, that praising yourself, reckoning up your own good deeds, contriving to have other people praise you, is not the way to please our Lord best. They who do so, are not the persons to pray earnestly, "Come, Lord Jesus."

With this amiable modesty, as far as regarded himself, S. John united a great charity in his manner of speaking of other persons: particularly of S. Peter,

^e S. John xix. 26, 27.

^f Ib. xx. 2.

for whom, as was natural, he seems to have had an especial affection. For instance, you may observe, if you read attentively, that S. John, in his account of S. Peter's denying Christ, carefully mentions all those things, which tend in some sort to excuse him, and shew how sorely he was tempted: as, that the servant, who attacked him for being with our Lord, was a kinsman of the very man whose ear Peter had cut off; and some other such circumstances. And again, he mentions very particularly some things which happened after the Resurrection, by which S. Peter shewed his affectionate eagerness and his desire, if he could, to make up for his fault. So that, as we read, we hardly know which we ought to admire most, S. Peter, for his anxious and earnest repentance, or S. John, for his kind and brotherly way of relating it.

But, still, in praising this great Apostle, we must begin and end with what he was to our Saviour;—His friend: particularly attached to Him, as a man to a friend in whom he delights. And this, no doubt, was one reason, why our Lord, on Whom no instance of true affection is ever lost, chose S. John to be His friend. He knew beforehand, how affectionately S. John would serve Him. Accordingly, as our Lord's friend, he, above all the rest, took care to treasure up His last words: that heavenly discourse, on the night before His Crucifixion, in which He bade His disciples farewell, and promised them and us a Divine Comforter.

Again, after our Lord was gone, S. John, perhaps more than any other of the Apostles, shewed his zeal against profane persons, who were creeping into the

Church, and corrupting her by false doctrine. He could not endure any such: his whole Gospel and his three epistles were all written to warn men against them: which shews what a mistake it is to think, that speaking strongly of corrupters of the faith, and warning God's people of them sharply, is at all contrary to Christian love and charity. Whereas, in the whole Book of God, there are no sharper and stronger warnings, no severer sentences about false prophets, than are to be found in the writings of him, who was the very apostle of love and charity. The preacher who taught us that "God is love;" the disciple whom Jesus loved: he has taught us that, if any man come as a teacher of religion, and bring not the true doctrine, as taught in the Church, concerning Christ come in the flesh, we are not to receive him into our houses, neither to bid him God speed §.

In this Christian care, then, as in all other parts of loyal affection, let us endeavour, by God's grace, to follow the holy and beloved disciple, and we shall be beloved as he was: and as we draw nearer our latter end, we may, without presumption, cry out as he did, when we read of Christ's near approach, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

§ 2 S. John 10.

SERMON VIII.

THE INTUITION OF LOVE.

S. JOHN'S DAY.

S. JOHN **xxi.** 7.

“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.”

WE have here S. John's own account of a very remarkable appearance of our Saviour, in Galilee, some time after His Resurrection. There were, together, seven of His disciples, who in remembrance of former days, or perhaps to help themselves in their deep poverty, had agreed to go a fishing. S. Peter and S. John were two of them. They had fished all night, and had taken nothing. “But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not, that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No. He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”

We may wonder, perhaps, that they did not all at once know Him, considering how like this miracle

was in many particulars to that former one of His, when on the very same water, in the presence of four at least of the very same persons, and after a night's fishing, in which they had had no better success than now, He bade them launch out into the deep water, and let down their nets for a draught: and they did so, and caught a great number, so that their net brake: and they had enough to fill both the ships. It seems, I say, a wonder, that the disciples did not immediately call to mind that miracle, when they saw it so nearly performed over again. But they were used to wonders, and as yet they were very forgetful. They had not received the Holy Spirit, Who was to bring all things to their remembrance. And our Lord, since His Resurrection, had come and gone so irregularly, that they hardly knew, when to expect Him. Thus it came to pass, that they knew not that it was Jesus, even when He had so nearly repeated His mighty work in their very sight. The rest, I mean, knew not; or, if they had a faint guess, they did not venture to speak: but the disciple whom Jesus loved, the saint of this day, S. John the Evangelist, he recognized his Master without any manner of doubt, and said at once unto Peter, "It is the Lord."

This is the point, to which I would draw your attention: that S. John knew Jesus before the rest; knew Him to be the Lord by signs and tokens, which had somehow not been understood by the rest. The rest all saw the miraculous draught of fishes, all saw the Lord standing on the shore, all heard His grave and kind voice, giving them directions. But they knew Him not: it came not as yet into their minds

that this was another visit of their Master to them, now that He was risen from the dead. They knew Him not. Only S. John knew Him. What was the reason of this? It was not that S. John had been longer acquainted with our Lord. There was as it seems but one day's difference in S. John's and S. Peter's introduction to Him, and S. Andrew and S. John followed Him, by the Baptist's direction, both on the same day. And all three, with S. James, were called at the same moment to forsake all and follow Him.

The reason, therefore, of S. John's knowing our Saviour, when the rest knew Him not, was not his having a longer and more perfect acquaintance with Him. But it is contained, I suppose, in the words, "The disciple, whom Jesus loved." Because Jesus loved S. John especially, therefore S. John was in a manner always on the look out for Him, ever watching for His signs and tokens, ever expecting and longing for His presence, and could not well miss Him when He came. Why will a child know its mother at a distance, sooner than another person would? Of course, because she loves it so dearly, and it is used to depend so entirely on her. Wherever it goes, it thinks of her; sees her in dreams, imagines her at hand very often, when she is away, discovers in every thing somewhat to remind it of her. This, and no other, was the sort of reason, why S. John perceived Christ sooner than the rest could. There was in him, we may well believe, more of that tender yearning affection, which a young child feels towards its mother and its nurse. He felt that he could not do without our Saviour: therefore

his eyes sought Him eagerly, wherever He was; and in the most unlikely places, he would still be fancying, "What if this should be my Master's token? What if He should even now shew Himself?" The constant employment of his heart was such as is described in that beautiful verse of the Psalmist, "My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning." When we are expecting any dear friend, how anxiously do we look out long before, how often imagine that we see him before he arrives! And why? Because we love him so much, and long so earnestly to set eyes upon him.

This tender yearning fondness for our Lord's Person, so suitable to one who was permitted to lean on His Bosom, is seen in many little portions of S. John's history. He was more especially vexed and angry, when his Master was treated disrespectfully: as children always want to strike those, whom they fancy to be ill-using their parents. Thus he and his brother S. James wanted to draw fire from heaven, to consume the Samaritans who would not receive our Lord. And when one was casting out devils, who did not, with them, follow Christ, John was the person to forbid him, out of jealousy, as it seems, for Christ's honour. He, leaning on our Lord's Bosom at the Supper, had no scruple in asking, which of them should betray Him; as knowing, in his true loving heart, that it could not be himself. He, standing, under the Cross, and hearing his dying Lord say, "Behold thy mother," comprehended at once that the words were spoken to him,

* Ps. cxxx. 6.

and what was their meaning; and from that hour made his house a home for the Blessed Virgin.

This betokens his being more familiar, than others were, with our Lord's voice and meaning. When he came to the Sepulchre, and saw the linen clothes lie, he went not in, at first, out of reverence, but when he did go in, his child-like faith told him at once what had happened. While others were reasoning, or for joy unable to believe, S. John, we read, "saw and believed." He felt that he could not mistake his Lord's tokens, any more than a child its mother's.

Even in his extreme old age, and long after his Divine Master had gone away into heaven, it should seem that S. John yet had the same feeling, the same lively child-like recollection of our Lord's Person and look, the same longing and looking-out for Him. He was ready and eager, as before, to welcome every sign of His presence. This appears in the book of Revelation, where after describing a glorious vision of seven golden candlesticks which he saw, that is, of the Church of God with its seven-fold graces, he adds, "^b In the midst of the candlesticks I saw One like unto the Son of Man"—glorious and bright above the brightest Angel, glorious with Divine glory, yet like unto the Son of Man, like Him Whom I remember humbling Himself to wash my feet, permitting me to lean on His Bosom, speaking to me from His painful Cross. In the very deep of that heavenly glory S. John saw and knew the crucified Body of our Lord, as in one of his later visions he saw Him preparing to judge the world. "^c I looked," he says, "and behold a white cloud,

^b Rev. i. 13.

^c Ib. xiv. 14.

and on the cloud one sat like the Son of Man :” like Jesus, as I remember Him in the days of His flesh. Here is still the same loving mind, the same earnest watchful eye, which caused this disciple alone to discover his Lord by the sea of Galilee, and point Him out to S. Peter, as in the text.

In short, S. John himself describes what I mean in the first words of his Epistle. “That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life,” i.e. of our Saviour; “that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.” His whole heart and memory was taken up with what he had seen, heard, and felt, of our Lord and his: all his joy was to dwell on it himself; all his business to declare it to others, and make them partakers of the same holy fellowship. Thus he went on in the world, till he was a hundred years old and more, everywhere gathering up tokens and helps to keep his gracious Master and Friend in memory; the whole world ministering to him, wherever he went, and whichever way he looked, that he might never want something to assure him of the loving Presence of Him, Whose beloved he had been. So that in heart and spirit, all through that long life, he was still leaning on Jesus’ Breast.

And this, my brethren, take notice of it: this man especially was the disciple whom Jesus loved. What are we to learn from this? Is it not most plain? Surely, that our Lord vouchsafes to love with a very dear and particular love those who so love Him, as to be seeking and finding His tokens always in all places. He loves to have our imaginations dwelling on Him,

so that whichever way we look, whichever way our thoughts turn, something or other may occur to put us in mind of Him. And this is one reason, why it is so good for young persons to be very early made familiar with the four holy Gospels. They are as four sacred pictures of the same Divine Original, which, being well studied, may never depart out of the mind's eye; wherever we go, we are sure to meet with remembrances of one or other of them. So it is, we know, in respect of our friends on earth. If we have ever dearly loved any one, how quick, how ready, how ingenious are we, to make out in everything what may remind us of that person. How is it with parents, when God in His providence has taken some beloved child to Himself? Do they find it hard to keep up the recollection of their treasure? Does it not rather haunt them perpetually, and meet them at every turn, so that, of the two, it is rather hard for them to think steadily of anything else? Thus will it be with us, more or less, in such measure as we come to learn the true love of God our Saviour. We shall find occasion to say continually in our hearts, as S. John to S. Peter, "It is the Lord." The holy Name Jesus will be written for us, in the sky, on the earth, on all created things. One way or another, all will tell of Him, all will minister to His glory. According to that hymn of the three blessed Children, all the works of the Lord will seem to join us in praising the Lord, in blessing and magnifying Him for ever.

But, mark it well, my brethren, for it most deeply concerns us all; if we with S. John would thus discern God in all things, we must strive to have, with

S. John, a pure virgin soul. We must make a great point of being ignorant of whatever things pollute and defile the conscience. And if unhappily we have come to any sinful knowledge of such things, we must make what haste we can to forget them; and as long as they haunt and teaze our memory, which will most likely be, more or less, as long as we live, we must vex and punish ourselves for them.

Except we be trying at least to be thus pure in heart, our hope of seeing God is but a dream. The impure, the wilfully impure, cannot see Him, neither in this world by faith and holy imaginations, nor in the other world by that unspeakable vision. Persons indeed may know a good deal of Holy Scripture, and may be quick and dextrous in remembering what they have read, and in applying it to the things around them; they may have, for a while, sharp and earnest feelings of their own; tears, what seem to be pious tears, ready at hand: and again, they may quite overflow with good and useful words, and may have in a very high degree, the gift of influencing others, and prevailing on them for good: and in these ways they may seem to themselves and to their neighbours full of grace, full of Christ; and yet they may not really love Him, they may not, really, be in a way to see Him as He is, because they are not, really and secretly and in the very depth of their consciences, purifying themselves even as He is pure. Some vanity, some evil desire, is allowed still in their poor frail hearts to take its turn with their Lord and Saviour. Alas! for those who seem good, should this be a true picture of them, unless they are striving day and night to be more like the virgin disciple:

to purge out the old leaven and offer themselves entirely to God; to fight against unclean thoughts, and peevish thoughts, and covetous and greedy thoughts; saying continually to ourselves, "It is the Lord," behold He is looking down into my heart; He, from the eternal shore where He stands, is marking how I behave myself, while I am tossed on this troubled sea; I may not, I will not affront Him with this evil thought, this neglect of duty. Think thus with yourself, and then cry mightily to Him, and then set in earnest about the next honest or innocent employment that comes in your way, and see if He do not gradually help you, even in that hardest task of purifying your own heart, which He had cleansed, and you again made impure. Then may you, with less fear of self-deceit exercise yourself in devout imaginations, beholding on all sides, as did S. John, signs of one like the Son of Man. Then it will make little difference to you, whether you live long or die early, whether your death be violent and painful like S. Stephen's, or a mere sinking to rest, as was that of the beloved disciple.

In every case, Christ will be with him, who really tries to be pure in heart. He has trusted himself with Christ; and none may take him out of Christ's Hand.

SERMON IX.

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR LITTLE CHILDREN, AND OUR DUTY TOWARDS THEM.

THE HOLY INNOCENTS' DAY.

S. MATT. xviii. 2.

*“Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in
the midst.”*

S. MARK ix. 36, 37.

*“He took a child, and set him in the midst of them :
and when He had taken him in His arms, He said
unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such
children in My Name, receiveth Me: and whoso-
ever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him
that sent Me.”*

ON CHRISTMAS-DAY, the Son of God manifested to all His creatures, in that most unspeakable and marvellous way, how that His delight is to be with the sons of men, to be Emmanuel, God with us: not only to be made so, and so to continue for a time, but to remain and abide such everlastingly: to be True Man, from henceforth even for ever. As one of our 39 Articles says, “The two whole and perfect Natures, i. e. the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided.”

As He thus, on Christmas-day, shewed His love for the whole race of sinful and fallen man, so on each one of these three great days which follow Christmas, He sheweth His special love for certain whom He has marked out, from among other Christians, and His delight in being with them. For it is the nature and the proof of love, as you know, to delight in being with the beloved person.

Which then are the three sorts of Christians, whom our Lord thus specially favours? First, His martyrs and those who give up all for His sake: of whom S. Stephen is the type and pattern. Next, His virgin-disciples: those who for His sake, being able to stand stedfast in their heart, have kept themselves single and chaste: the leader of whom, among Christian men, has always been considered in the Church to be S. John, His own beloved disciple. Thirdly, the babes, and little children, of whom the first fruits were those Innocents, whose remembrance we keep to-day. For this is very remarkable in our Emmanuel, "God with us," that, as He had His delight with the sons of men, truly sympathizing in all our natural affections, so He shared that feeling with us, which all mankind have, unless they are more than usually degraded and brought low by sin and selfishness: viz. that He was fond of young children, and took a particular interest in them. Therefore He was born as a little Child Himself, and went through all the troubles and infirmities of childhood, as other children do. He had to be nursed, and fed, and dressed, and carried about from place to place, He, the Creator and Preserver of all, Who "upholdeth all things by the word of His power." Thus He vouch-

safed to be an Infant, among infants ; and afterwards He vouchsafed to be a Boy among boys, increasing (in sight of men) in wisdom and stature, as in years. He, Who is Himself Very Wisdom, the Eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, Whom the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain: "Who is Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, which was and is and is to come." We are not then to doubt, but earnestly to believe, that He dearly loves these little ones, and watches over them with a love, infinitely surpassing the most perfect love of the tenderest parent or nurse. He knows, what even no mother's love can know for certain, what they need at every moment, and what all their cries mean ; and if, as He hath told us, it is a care with Him to feed the young ravens that call upon Him, much more will He provide for every one of these little ones, whom, in that astonishing way, He has made not only His own creatures and children, but His own brethren and sisters, partakers of the same nature with Himself.

And He makes haste, as we acknowledge to-day, which is only the fourth day from His Birth, to shew to men and Angels this His great love for young children, by allowing those babes at Bethlehem to be in some sense His first martyrs, the first who shed their blood for Him. For the cause of their death, as you know, was no other than their belonging to Christ, as being born near the same time, and in the same place. Therefore, as a great king would feel himself bound to provide not only for the soldiers or sailors or other persons who devoted their lives and endured wounds and hardships in his service, but also

for their children, who could as yet do nothing at all for him : so our Lord, and the Captain of our salvation, hath of His Royal Bounty, glorified these Innocents, and make them saints in heaven, as truly as He glorified S. Stephen and S. John, and the rest of His holy martyrs, and virgins, who went after Him, knowing better whither they went.

And for the same great love's sake, He encouraged mothers, and nurses, and elder sisters to bring their little ones, even quite babies, to Him. He did not mind being interrupted in His serious work of warning the people and instructing His disciples, just that He might touch those little ones, might lay His hands upon them and pray. You all, I dare say, remember this well ; for you are put in mind of it, you know, every time there is a christening in the Church. His disciples were vexed, I suppose, because they could not see the common sense (as men speak) of bringing the infants to Him, and putting them into His arms, in the very midst of His preaching and teaching. They said in their hearts, What is the use of it ? And they tried to hinder the women, from bringing the infants. But what said our gracious Lord ? "He was much displeased : " He even had indignation. Then only, and on one other occasion, is it said that He felt anything like anger : and the other occasion was, when the Pharisees were watching to accuse Him for healing on the Sabbath day : " ^a He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts." Twice in His life he was angry, and both times because they grudged at mercy being shewn to those, who could not help themselves.

^a S. Mark iii. 5.

However, we see here plainly enough the deep love He had for those little ones ; and the Church instructs us to take it for a pledge of His loving purpose towards all our little ones, His Will to have them brought to Him in Holy Baptism.

On that occasion He shewed His tender love towards infants, children in arms, who had to be brought to Him by others. A little before, He had given a token of His care for elder children also. When the disciples, having heard of His rising again, which they could not understand, had begun to discourse among one another, who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, "^b He sat down," like a judge on the point of pronouncing sentence, and called those twelve in particular, who had reason to think they were marked out for high places in the Church, and laid down this rule, enacted this law, for them and for us : " If any man desire to be first, let him be last of all, and servant of all." And then " He took a child, and set him in the midst of them," and took " him in His arms," and " said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in My Name, receiveth Me : and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth Him that sent Me : for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great." You see that this child was not an infant, because it is said, our Lord *called him* unto Him. Here then is something to be very much thought of, very seriously pondered over by boys and girls, when they begin to be able to read and hear the holy Book with understanding. Here the great God of heaven and earth and only Saviour of your souls shews Himself to you children, to each one of

^b S. Mark ix. 35 - 37. S. Luke ix. 46 - 48.

you, as One delighting in children, loving to watch their innocent ways. Depend upon it, it is so still; though *you* cannot see *Him*, His Eye is ever fixed on *you*. He has called you to Him in Holy Baptism, and has set you in the midst in His Church, as among His disciples: and His Will is, that you should always go on in such lowly and loving ways, thinking so little of yourselves, so ready always to give up the best to others, that He may say of you, as He did of that little one whom He was holding in His arms, “^c Whosoever shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

And if children are to think very much of our Lord as their friend, so all we, the rest are to take very special notice, how He would have us behave to children. “Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My Name receiveth Me.” We are to receive them in Christ's Name. What is “receiving” them? Bidding them welcome, dealing kindly with them, taking an interest in them, bearing with their infirmities, consenting to be put out of our way for them, if perchance we can do them good. This is what most persons will do, in some measure, towards some children, by a kind of instinct, and when they are so minded. But the mind of Christ towards little children, the mind which all you, as Christians, should endeavour to have, is something far different from this ordinary good-nature, or what people call fondness for children. He bids you love children, and take an interest in them, as a matter of duty, not of mere fancy or humour. His word is, “Receive them in My

^c S. Matt. xviii. 4.

Name : " as Christian children, because they belong to Christ ; and because you too belong to Christ, as Christian men and Christian women. You must regard them, in a certain sense, as so many Christs, for so they are, as members of Christ. Therefore you must *reverence* them : you must look up to them as something sacred and holy, as a peculiar treasure belonging to your Lord and Master. Do not turn away from this saying : do not scorn it, nor too much wonder at it. Think how you would feel bound to behave to a young child, whom you knew to be a king's son or daughter ; knowing also at the same time, that the king himself was looking on. Surely you would try to be respectful ; you would not venture on any rude liberties ; you would not encourage the young child in ways, which you knew his father had forbidden. Now then hear, how the great King and Father of all speaks of all who lead a child into sin. " ^d Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." What is *offending* them ? Leading them into sin : causing them to stumble and take false steps on their way through this world to the next. You think it a light thing, e.g. to say bad words in the hearing of young people ; or perhaps you are so used to those words, that you utter them without thinking at all of it, without even being aware what you are saying, or in whose hearing. But observe : the young child hears what you say, and remembers it : more especially if he hears it over and over, as he is sure to do if he

^d S. Matt. xviii. 6.

is much in your company : and what he so hears, he is almost sure to imitate; and so, in a very short time, he will have learned your oaths or other bad words; they will be in his mouth on all occasions, and he in his turn will have become a corrupter of others. But we know for certain, He Who is the Truth has Himself told us in thunder from heaven, that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain," i. e. if you die in that sin, it will surely be your ruin : God cannot and will not forgive you : for you have sinned away, as far as you yourself are concerned, the virtue of the only Name whereby you can be saved. To teach a Christian person to swear, then, or to use other words, unclean words for example, which are as bad as swearing, this is surely offending one of Christ's little ones with as grievous an offence as can possibly be : it is causing them to stumble and fall and rise no more. If you have ever done so, you hear your sentence : "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." What will you do, which way will you look, where will you find a rock to fall on you, or a hill to cover you, when the Great Father will say to you, Where are My little ones whom you have corrupted and ruined ? Sad and dreadful was that story we heard to-day, of that wicked tyrant in his reckless cruelty destroying all the young infants in Bethlehem. But as far as the offence, the mischief goes, the murder of their tender bodies, though it were by thousands, was nothing to the murder of one soul. The holy young Innocents were more than over-paid for all the harm Herod could do them ; they

passed from this evil world to be glorious saints in heaven : but the mischief thou doest in corrupting one single soul, teaching or tempting one child to grow up and die a profane swearer, or unchaste, or a thief, is a mischief which never can be undone, a weight intolerable through all eternity. Alas ! how many in every town and village are daily and hourly tying this weight, this millstone, about their own necks ! For this is really what thou doest, whenever thou speakest a profane or lewd word, or committest a profane or lewd or dishonest action, with the knowledge of any of Christ's little ones: much more, if thou expressly tempt them, laughing at their scruples, overpowering their godly fears, and thus openly doing the devil's work !

And even when things are not so bad as this, many children's souls, we may fear, are ruined, many assuredly receive great damage, by the way people have of "spoiling" them, as it is called ; letting them have their own way. Persons may think they do this for love, but it is really a selfish feeling. They do not believe in the Lord's sayings ; they do not care for the souls of His little ones, sufficiently to take the trouble of looking after those little ones, and reprov- ing them as they ought to be reprov- ed. They are like the unfortunate Eli, who weakly permitted his sons to go on in their evil ways, because he could not bear to thwart them. Take care, my brethren, lest some of you, in your too common habit of allowing your children to go on, as they themselves please, should be bringing on yourselves and on them a sentence like that of Eli and his sons. You are in the way of honouring your sons above God. What if they and

you should in one day die, both of you, by the second death, in that day, known to the Lord, when He will come to take vengeance for the murdered souls of His little ones? What if your portion should, in the end, be with Herod? My brethren, do let us be very careful. It will never do to treat the little ones who may belong to us as mere playthings, with whom we may amuse ourselves as we please; or leave them unnoticed and uncared for, to find company and diversion wherever they can: or to care only for their *temporal* good, and leave them, if they please, to go on without God in the world. If they are to be saved, those whom they belong to, must bring them to Christ; they must indeed. And bringing them to Christ is no slight matter: it cannot be done in a moment, and then put by: it must be going on day by day, and year by year, as long as they are in this world, and within your reach. Thus to be glad and thankful, when a child is born, is natural: but Christ would have you receive it as from Him, and in His Name, as something unspeakably precious, which He has lent you for a time: and for which you will have to answer bye and bye to Christ in His own Presence. Again, outwardly to bring them to Baptism is of course an easy matter: but that is only the first beginning of your duty. As the Church after the babe is christened, gives it back into your arms, with a charge about its Christian teaching, take care that you receive it so given back, in Christ's Name; as Christ's own child, put out to you for a while to be nursed. Use your child with all tenderness and reverence, night and day, and under all circumstances; teach him Christ's way of speech: the Lord's Prayer,

the Creed and the commandments: bring him to school and Church, when old enough, and above all things take care that the home-teaching do not contradict the teaching of the school and of the Church: keep far from him, as well as you can, all unbelieving, all impure books and conversation: be steady, not fanciful and irregular, in your ways of keeping him in order; for then he will know you are doing it for love, for his sake, not your own: in a word, lead him, as Christ shall help you, through a devout Confirmation, to a holy and worthy Communion, and from one Communion to another, and from the last Communion to heaven.

And do not, I beseech you, say in your hearts, "It cannot be: he is preaching impossibilities." My brethren, we are sure, it may be; for God has commanded it. And there is great help towards it: that a young child naturally trusts and loves his parents and those who treat him kindly; he is yet guiltless of actual sin. These are good beginnings, which, by the help of God's Spirit, may be turned into Christian virtues; only do you, parents and teachers, watch and pray. And great indeed will be your reward. Whatever you do in Christ's Name for those little ones, the Father and the Son will set it down, as so much done to themselves. For you heard what was promised, and let parents especially remember this saying, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My Name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me."

SERMON X.

THE SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD EXEMPLIFIED IN HEROD.

HOLY INNOCENTS' DAY.

S. MATT. ii. 16.

“Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem.”

Most of the histories, contained in God's holy Book, are so framed, as to mix warning with encouragement in the instruction they give us. They are pictures of just such a world as we live in: neither entirely and hopelessly bad, nor yet ever very good. And this is just what we might make, if we would, most useful to ourselves. For thus we are shewn, that no bad times can excuse us for want of goodness: it being plain from the Bible, that there have always been some good persons left, even in the worst of times. And, on the other hand, it thus appears, that no times, however good, no circumstances, however favourable, can put us out of danger; there having always been too many, who have continued to fall away from God, when He had done most to keep them to Himself.

It is so in the history of the martyrdom of the Holy Innocents, in remembrance of which the Church has ordained this day to be kept holy. It is half encouragement, and half warning.

For what can be more gracious encouragement, to those who have but scanty outward opportunities of acquainting themselves with God, than the seasonable assistance which He gave to those Wise men, whose coming to worship Christ gave occasion to these things? They came from the east, a long journey, because they wished to do God's Will, and pay honour to His Son. And when the star, which at first guided them, vanished out of their sight, they did not, for discouragement, leave off their good work, but made enquiry at Jerusalem, the likeliest place to find out, where He was, that was "born King of the Jews." And having thus made it out, that He was somewhere in Bethlehem, they were not left to themselves to make out the house where He was, but the very "star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was." As much as to tell all the world, that God will never be wanting to those, who sincerely take pains to do His Will, how far soever He may seem to have placed them from ordinary ways of knowing Him, the ordinary opportunities of devotion.

Another instance of God's kindness to the Wise men was this; that He warned them in a dream not to tell Christ's enemy where to find Him: which otherwise, in the simplicity of their hearts, they were going to do. No doubt, God could have delivered His Son, even if they had done as Herod bade them, and brought him word where he might

find Him, to put Him to death. But it would have been a grief to these good men to have brought the Holy Child into danger, even thus ignorantly: and this sorrow God graciously spared them. Not to mention, that very possibly their own lives might be saved by their not returning to Herod. For it would have been part of his hateful worldly wisdom, to destroy the witnesses of Christ, if he could, as well as Christ Himself.

Another great matter of encouragement to any one who reads this history with a good mind, is the consideration of God's dealings with the Holy Innocents themselves.

It is true, they were cut off by the sword even in their mothers' arms, before they could know good from evil. Their death was, in a worldly sense, most untimely: but, in a better and heavenly sense, it was blessed indeed, and took place in the happiest time. It was just what, if they could have chosen, we may be sure, they would have fixed on for themselves. There is no other way that we can think of, in which little babes, like these, could so abundantly glorify God, as by dying (though they knew it not) in the place of His Son, that Son Who after a few years was to die in their place, and so purchase, as it were, their lives, and all that they had, to be His own property for ever. Even if we judged after the manner of men, we should account them happy, who were thus taken away in peace from the evil, so soon to come upon their nation, the great temptation and danger of rejecting Jesus Christ. Nor has the Church ever made any question of their being brought, for His sake, to everlasting rest in heaven: having been taught by

S. Matthew to apply to them the words of the prophet, comforting their afflicted mothers: “^a There is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.”

These are the comfortable parts of the history of the martyrdom of these holy and innocent babes. But we are not to forget, that it contains warning as well as comfort. There never was a more awful warning, than what is set forth, to every one calling himself a Christian, in the conduct of king Herod in this matter.

We are apt indeed to think of Herod, as of Judas, or of the other murderers of our Blessed Lord, as though theirs was a sort of wickedness quite out of the common; quite beyond any that can be committed by ourselves, or in our Christian times. But it is no more true to suppose this, than it would be to imagine the *good* parts of Scripture history, the character, for instance, of Jesus Christ Himself, beyond the reach of our imitation.

Let us consider Herod's doings, as they are related in this chapter, in their order, and we shall find them but too like a great deal of what we daily see and experience: too like the general conduct of every obstinate, worldly-minded man.

To judge fairly of this, we must put ourselves in Herod's place, and look at all his doings, as he might have done at the time. He did not know, when he was first troubled at the news of Christ's birth, that this trouble of his would end in the murder of so many innocent babes. But we know it, as we read his history, and hate him beforehand for it. This

^a Jer. xxxi. 17.

hinders us from seeing the likeness between him and ourselves. But let us, in reading such histories as this, keep this thought always in mind: that if we give way to such passions, such envy and malice, as Herod's, it is not our own goodness, but God's providence, which keeps us from being just as cruel and outrageous as he.

For if you only consider the first beginning of this great wickedness, you would not, by any means, be prepared for the end of it, any more than for the end of those sins of your own, which to you appeared little, at the time you committed them. When he heard of Christ's being born to be King of the Jews, "he was troubled." Instead of rejoicing with the Angels, humbling himself with the shepherds, and praising God with both, he was troubled with fear, and wished it had not been so. This, you will say, was bad enough: to grieve, instead of giving thanks for the salvation of the world. But you may consider, that Herod did not look on the birth of Jesus as the salvation of the world. He only thought of what his own power and dignity would lose, by the birth of one who would set up, as he supposed, to be king of the Jews in his place. His share in this world, he thought, was going from him: and no wonder that he, having his heart set upon no better world, should be troubled and vexed in spirit.

Now, we all of us profess, of course, to be glad, when Christ is born, and to give thanks with all our hearts, for the good news of the salvation of the world. We should be very much shocked at any one, whom we saw troubled and sorry for this, God's greatest mercy. But how is it with us, when we

come to find, as we must, if ever we understand the Gospel aright, that this most blessed coming is to take away any of our portion in this present world ; our ease, our pleasure, or our money ? The common case, I apprehend, is something like what follows :

We are not altogether ill-intentioned, when first we begin thinking for ourselves. We would fain serve God, but then we do not like parting altogether with the world : and we fancy it much more possible than it is, to join both services together. When, therefore, we come, after a time, to understand the Gospel of God, and the course of His providence, better ; when we find that our selfish expectations here, and our reasonable hopes hereafter, cannot both stand together ; that pleasures must be abstained from, profit given up, disappointments and losses endured for God's sake ; we are greatly tempted to be troubled, and wish it otherwise ; and every thing depends on our giving way to the temptation or no. If we once do so ; if we allow ourselves to dispute God's Will, and to keep our hold of what displeases Him, for this world's sake, we are beginning to give way to Herod's sin ; we are then troubled at hearing that Christ is born ; that God has interfered, to hinder our taking as much as we please of the delights and vanities of the world.

We have also an encouragement in this disobedience of heart, too like what Herod met with. For we read, that not only he was troubled at the news of Christ's birth, but likewise all Jerusalem, all those who ought to be the people of God, were troubled and amazed "with him." So it is in the concern, which worldly and careless spirits feel, on finding

out how much self-denial the Gospel requires of them. They are kept in countenance by their neighbours, who generally shew too plainly, both by words and deeds, how much they dislike the doctrine of the Cross, how strange it sounds to them, to be told they must not please themselves. And this is true, not only of the heathen who know not God, but also of the Christian world, such as we see and experience it to be. There is no sort of foolish pleasure, no sort of worldly-mindedness, which cannot find enough there, to encourage and keep it in countenance.

Supposing, for instance, that any young man or woman chooses to spend all their time in mere diversions; this is as sinful a thing, as contrary to the true love of God, as can well be imagined: yet, if it be spoken strongly against, to any particular person, there are so many, who, he knows, must needs be troubled or offended with him, that he will care very little for what you can say. He will answer, "It must be uncharitable to speak so harshly, of what so many good-natured and creditable persons constantly practise." And thus, if the conscience be a little troubled at first, it is too soon silenced by the consideration, that "all Jerusalem," the whole Church of God, must needs be "troubled with" it.

It is the same with tradesmen about their little unfair gains. Every one in their business, they say, does the same: and why should they set up to be more liberal, or honester than their decent neighbours?

Thus you see, how many Christians ignorantly liken themselves to Herod: first, in being troubled at finding how strict an obedience the Gospel of Christ requires of them; and then, in comforting

themselves with the thought, that all their neighbours have as much reason to be troubled as they.

The next thing this wicked king does, is to put on a show of love for our Saviour: "Go," says he, "and search diligently for the young Child, and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also." This Herod did, in order to make as sure as he could of murdering the innocent Babe, of Whom he was suddenly become so jealous. Just so, the worst enemies of Jesus Christ, those who crucify Him afresh by their sins, do very seldom declare openly, that they have any sort of dislike of Him. They are baptized themselves, have their children baptized, many come to Church, many to the Holy Communion, and some read their Bibles diligently; but it is much in the same spirit, in which Herod conducted this search of his. He sought the young Child to destroy Him: and sinners too often study the Will of Christ in the Scriptures, with no other purpose than to make it void, if they can, by finding in it excuses for their sins.

As for example, because S. Paul has said, "^b If any man provide not for his own household, he is worse than an unbeliever;" many a worldly-minded man has pleaded this, before now, as a reason, why he ought to lay up money for his children, instead of giving to those who are in need. Whereas, in fact, the Apostle had no such meaning: his purpose being to reprove such as hoarded up their money, or spent it all on themselves, instead of giving it to their nearest relations who stood in need of it.

This I have mentioned as an instance of the manner

^b 1 Tim. v. 8.

in which people, pretending great love to Holy Scripture, destroy its true meaning altogether, because they will not part with some favourite passion or custom which it condemns. And in this way, when they least think of it, half the world are Herods in heart.

But when the case becomes too clear to them, as it must soon do, if they are sensible men, and they see plainly, how impossible it is to keep the world and their innocency both : then it is that they are tempted to throw off the mask, to declare themselves as open enemies to Christianity, as Herod to Christ, when in his fury he commanded all the children in Bethlehem to be destroyed, rather than leave a chance of missing the Holy Child.

Though of a cruel and bloody disposition, it is likely, this was far indeed from his thoughts, when he first set about persecuting our Lord. So it is with those Herods among us Christians, when they have once begun to deal deceitfully with God's word. One sin, and one excuse, draws on another, till at last they are entangled in such crooked ways, that they know not how to go back. Let Herod once be troubled at the birth of Christ, and he will soon be guilty of falsehood, malice, and murder. Let a Christian once allow himself to find Christ's commandments too strict for him, and there is no knowing, how soon he may be a confirmed unbeliever, or a profane scoffer at religion. What murderer ever, on beginning his evil courses, supposed that they would end in murder? Yet, through the whole of such an one's conduct, each thing generally follows so close upon what went before, that it seems to him as if he could not help it. The only way to be safe from the

very worst crimes, is to stop at the first beginnings of crime altogether; to make up your mind, that nothing can by any means be a sufficient reason for doing wrong.

Last of all, you may observe, concerning Herod, that this most outrageous crime did him no good whatever. By God's wise and good providence, His Son was delivered, being removed into Egypt before the murderers got to Bethlehem. And the murder itself served to accomplish a very remarkable prophecy of Jeremiah; and so to bear witness (very contrary to the murderer's intention) to the kingdom and Person of our Lord.

As the likeness holds, in other respects, between king Herod and such as dislike the Gospel among ourselves, so, we may be sure, it is always found to answer in this particular. Do what they will against the truth, they are certain to recommend and forward it in the end. They bear witness to it in spite of themselves, by living such lives as God foretold His enemies should, and finally coming to such miserable ends as He threatened them with.

Not that this always appears immediately, any more than king Herod and his counsellors knew immediately that their wicked and violent purpose had failed, and that the Son of God was safe in Egypt, out of their reach. God keeps His judgements, for a while, out of sight, to try us more thoroughly. But, from what little is in sight, we are quite certain, that the more we know of them, the more reason we should find to agree in the wise man's conclusion: "c Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his

c Eccl. viii. 12.

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days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God."

It appears, from what has been said, that if we would escape this bitter disappointment, and the sin and condemnation of Herod, our great rule must be this: not to suffer that trouble to get the better of us, which we naturally feel, when we find the Gospel requires self-denial. Let us remember the young man in the Gospel, who, being warned, for the first time, that, if he would obtain eternal life, he must forsake all that he had, and follow Christ, was sad at that saying, and "went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions ^d." You see, his overcoming that trouble, which would cause itself to be felt when the cross was so suddenly laid upon him, would have made all the difference to him. For aught we know, it might be as much as his happiness was worth.

Christians, when any thing troubles them in the holy commandments of their God, should use themselves steadily to consider, that, nevertheless, they *are* God's; and that to shrink from them, as too strict, is direct rebellion; the grossest affront to Him, Who made us what we are, and loves us too well to bid us do any thing, but what is really good and necessary for us.

Again; once use yourself to endeavour at escaping God's law, and there is no end to the sin and misery, into which you will plunge yourself. You will be led on, farther and farther, from your home, till you know not where you are, and it is too late to turn back. How much, how sincerely, will you then wish, that you had never strayed from home! that

^d S. Matt. xix. 23.

you had prayed to the Almighty in good time, and obtained His grace to do always, without hesitation, what you certainly knew to be right.

Even if one set religion aside, to expect one's own way in all things is one of the most absurd and inexcusable of all human errors. No little plan of business, or even of pleasure, can ever be accomplished without self-denial. It is senseless and unthinking, to the last degree, to expect the great end of life more cheaply than these lesser every-day enjoyments. Let us gladly, therefore, make up our minds to deny ourselves in all things, rather than deny Christ.

Consider, lastly, that when you once begin to think good advice scrupulous, and the commandments too severe, you cannot then pretend ignorance of their strict meaning. You are, by your own account, awakened ; you are not one of those who follow their passions quite blindly. So much the worse for you, then, if, knowing your duty, you are not most careful to do it.

SERMON XI.

APOSTOLICAL SYMPATHY.

THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.

1 COR. ix. 22.

“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

S. PAUL'S day is, in one respect, different from most of the Saints' days of the holy Church universal. We keep, not only the anniversary of his martyrdom, which took place the same day with that of S. Peter, but also that of his Conversion to the faith of Christ.

One reason for this, no doubt, is the special appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Conversion ; and, for a like reason, we observe the day of S. John the Baptist's Nativity, not the day of his Martyrdom : taking that point in the history of both saints, which marks them out most, as especial instruments for the glory of our Divine Saviour, and brings Him, as it were, nearest to them.

Another and a very manifest reason for this distinction in the case of S. Paul, is the knowledge we have of the particular purpose, for which God raised him up ; namely, to be the Apostle of the Gentiles.

and to bestow by him on the Church very great and remarkable blessings. It has pleased Providence that his example and character should be much more fully set before us, than that of any other saint of the New Testament. In him, more than in any other, we are given to see the Church of God, such as she was intended to be in her conflict with the wicked world. I mean the Church of God *in action*: enduring toils; overcoming difficulties; silencing blasphemies; directing consciences; winning her way against opposers; casting down unholy or proud imaginations; bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

For which reason those old writers, who were most likely to know the true meaning of Holy Scripture, were of opinion that the tribe of Benjamin, that warlike and active tribe, was intended to be, as among the tribes of Israel, a figure or shadow of S. Paul, and of those who, like him, should be raised up to do great things in the Church, to enlarge her border, and confound her enemies. Benjamin, as Jacob prophesied^a, was to “ravin as a wolf: in the morning” he was “to take the prey, and in the evening to divide the spoil,” or distribute the food. So S. Paul at first was a persecutor, but in his later age had the office of feeding God’s people; among the Gentiles especially.

This, then, was S. Paul’s particular calling: to have the care of all the Churches; to preach Christ, where He was not yet named; to win ground from the enemy: to be a man of war in God’s cause; a ruler in His Israel; a governing, directing person,

^a Gen. xlix. 27.

to whom thousands were to look up, and come to ask counsel of him. He had influence far and wide. Accordingly, we find in S. Paul, speaking after the manner of men, the sort of character which the world calls great; firmness, wisdom, courage, self-denial, the power of leading and guiding others, without those faults and corruptions, which are sure to beset such remarkable persons, when left to themselves and to the world.

Among other things which particularly fitted him to govern and guide the flock of God, is that which is mentioned in the text; that he was "made all things to all men." This is an expression which might easily be mistaken, and has been so before now: as though S. Paul recommended, by his advice and example, a sort of craft in religious matters, pretending to agree with men when you really do not, humouring them in bad ways, concurring with them to a certain length in what you know or fear to be wrong; but all the while for their benefit, and with a view of doing, on the whole, more good in the end. It is easy to see and feel how persons may be tempted to this sort of conduct. For example; what is more common than for Christians, even well-meaning persons, to keep up not merely kindness, but intimate friendships with persons whom they know to be living in fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness, extortion, or any such thing, concerning which persons S. Paul says, "that with such an one we ought not to eat^b?" Well, notwithstanding this rule of S. Paul, Christians do often wilfully keep such company; and if you asked

^b 1 Cor. v. 11.

them why, they would say that it was with a view to do more good on the whole: they wink at their present sins, and seem to countenance them, in order to get their affection, and bring them to amendment. Are not many marriages made by this rule, or, at least, defended by this excuse? and how do they commonly turn out?

This instance may suffice to shew what is meant, when we speak of becoming all things to all men as a bad thing, and warn people against it: and it is an error which Holy Scripture notices in some very fearful examples: as in the case of Saul, who first intruded on the priests' office, sacrificing without warrant to do so, lest the people should refuse to stay with him^c; and afterwards spared the cattle of Amalek, contrary to the express word of God, because, as he acknowledged, he "feared the people^d." There is also the case of Aaron, who consented to the making and honouring the golden calf, because, as he said, the people were "set on mischief^e:" that is, I suppose, there was no knowing how much worse they might behave; they might murder him, and cast off God's worship entirely, if they were not indulged for the time in this one wrong desire of theirs.

A much lighter error, but yet an error of the same kind, was that which S. Paul himself had once to correct in the great Apostle S. Peter, when, rather than give present dissatisfaction to certain Jewish converts which were there, he separated himself from the Gentile Christians^f, and so encouraged a division

^c 1 Sam. xiii. 11.

^e Exod. xxxii. 22.

^d Ib. xv. 24.

^f Gal. ii. 11.

in the Church, and encouraged also the low notion, that believers were still under the law of Moses.

In all these cases there was a kind of accommodation practised, such as Holy Scripture evidently blames, though sometimes more and sometimes less. But this of S. Paul in the text is very different; it is an example, not a warning. And the difference may be put in one word: it is not accommodation which S. Paul encourages, but sympathy. He does not say that he practised what would please others, to win them, but he says, that he always had an eye to them; he put himself into their place. He thought with himself, "Were I a heathen, or a Jew, a young man or an old, an advanced or an imperfect Christian, a rich man or a poor, a master or a servant; what would my thoughts, and feelings, and fancies be, when such and such holy truths, or divine commandments, were made known to me?" And according to what his wise and charitable heart, guided by the Holy Spirit, told him of the needs and feelings of other persons, so he ordered his ways towards them, and his manner of speaking to them, and dealing with them. As he says to the Galatians, he was accustomed to "change his voice^s;" not always to please and soothe them. Sometimes it was quite the other way: as when he smote Elymas with blindness, calling him "the child of the devil, the enemy of righteousness^h." He knew that such fearful words, and the judgement which accompanied them, "not seeing the sun for a season," was just what the case of that unhappy person required. And we may remember, S. Paul himself knew well, what were the feelings of a person

^s Gal. iv. 20.

^h Acts xiii. 10.

struck blind, and how such a stroke of God's anger might lead to true repentance. For he himself was blind for three days after his conversion, "and did neither eat nor drinkⁱ:" and what he went through in that time, no man knows; but we know how he served God afterwards.

Thus much to shew, how feeling for all men might make a person severe in some cases, no less than indulgent in others. And hence we may learn what to think of the many cases in S. Paul's history, where we find him practising a more indulgent kind of discipline. It was not out of mere good-nature, as it is called, much less out of any crafty or unworthy policy; but it was just putting himself, in each instance, into the place of the other persons concerned, and doing as he felt they would wish him to do, if they knew what was for their real good. It was, according to his own rule, "pleasing his neighbour," not for the sake of pleasing him, but "for his good," not in this world, but "to edification^k."

To take the instances which the Apostle himself had been enumerating just before the text: "Unto the Jews," first, "I became," says he, "as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." How was this? For we know how earnestly S. Paul opposed himself to the Jewish prejudice, that circumcision and keeping the ceremonies of the law were at all necessary to salvation. How, then, did he become as a Jew to the Jews?

Look at that letter of his, in which he most opposes their ceremonies; look at the epistle to the Romans, and see how he speaks of them there. "I also am

ⁱ Acts ix. 9.

^k Rom. xv. 2.

an Israelite." "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren¹." Look in the Acts of the Apostles, and see what trouble he took, how he went out of the way, to shew them that he revered the Mosaical ceremonies, and did not hold them wicked, though he would not have them reckoned part of the Christian law. He circumcised Timothy^m, when he might well have had an excuse for not doing it, namely, that his father was a Greek; thus teaching us by example, that in the matter of any religious ceremony, when it is doubtful what to do, it is better to err on the side of too much reverence, than on the contrary side. Again, when he came to Rome, the first thing he did was to send for the elders of the Jews, and explain to them that he was not in prison for any thing "contrary to the religion and customs of their forefathers," neither had "aught to accuse his nation ofⁿ."

In short, his whole conduct towards his countrymen agreed well with the feeling he expressed in that vision at Jerusalem, not long after his conversion. When our Lord appeared to him, and ordered him out of Jerusalem, he clearly felt it a disappointment^o. He remonstrated, if one may say so, with our Saviour, for leave to go on yet a while in the cause which was so near his heart,—the cause of his own countrymen; and, if need were, to be martyred among them. "Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I

¹ Rom. ix. 2.^m Acts xvi. 2.ⁿ Ib. xxviii. 17.^o Ib. xxii. 17.

also was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." As much as to say, (for surely it seems part of his meaning,) "If I was so wild in my unbelief, surely there is hope for them also; and O that I might be the person to turn them!"

Thus much for the holy Apostle's especial sympathy with the Jews. As to the Gentiles, them also he mentions just before the text, saying; "To them which are without law I became as without law, that I might gain them that are without law." That is, he put himself in the place of the Gentiles, and said and did what their condition required; as when, writing to the Corinthians^p, he so greatly slighted human wisdom, which he knew they were inclined to think too much of: also as when, speaking to the Athenians, he made use of their own poets, their own altars, their own customs, and the like^q; whereby to bring them to attend to the truth of Christ. But towards the people of Derbe and Lystra, who were in the very act of idolizing himself, he spake with all vehemence, as the case required, seeing it was the only thing which could hinder them from offering sacrifice to him^r. In neither place did he flatter or beguile, or at all encourage them in any thing wrong, no, not with a view to greater good hereafter, as we, in our short-sighted self-sufficient plans, are so often tempted to do; but he used that gift which God gave him, of entering into their minds and feelings, to edify them, whether by soothing or contradiction, as might be needed.

And as it was with him in respect of Jew or

^p 1 Cor. ii.

^q Acts xvii.

^r Ib. xiv.

Gentile, so also in respect of rich and poor, and the other distinctions of life; to masters and servants, husbands and wives, in short, to all sorts of people, he speaks as one who had the power, by the Divine Spirit which was in him, to feel not only *with* them but *for* them; not only what they would like, but what their condition would most require. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven^a." "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not purloining, not answering again: but shewing all good fidelity^b." Again, to the rich he says; "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches^c." To the poor, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content: I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound^d." Of young men he says, "Exhort them to be sober-minded^e;" of the old, "Let them be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience^f." So thoroughly had the Holy Ghost taught him to enter impartially and affectionately into the condition, the mind, and wants of all men.

Now I said, that S. Paul was a representative, what we may in some sense call a type, of the Church or Kingdom of Christ in *action* and *warfare*. *His* teaching seems especially recorded as the completest standard and model of *her* teaching. May it then be truly said that the Church is made all things to all men? Surely it may: the mystical Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, animated by His Spirit, has a word of

^a Col. iv. 1.^b Tit. ii. 10.^c 1 Tim. vi. 17.^d Phil. iv. 12.^e Tit. ii. 6.^f Ib. 2.

seasonable instruction, and an aid of seasonable grace, for every one, even the meanest, of His members. Surely there is no person, rich or poor, young or old, good or bad, wise or foolish, for whom the Church, as she speaks in our Prayer-book, has not a word of comfort or censure, of warning or encouragement, in their season.

But if we desire to see, how exactly the Church from the beginning practised this charitable consideration of S. Paul, we need only look to the account of the advice given by the Apostles at Jerusalem to S. Paul himself, when he came there after his ministry among the Gentiles^v. They told him their judgment was, that in order to satisfy those Jews who had been told that he treated the law with irreverence, he should join in certain ceremonies, whereby it might be understood, that although he would not have the law forced on the Gentiles, yet he honoured it as God's ordinance, and had no desire to disturb the other Jewish Christians in their conscientious obedience to it.

In a word, the decision of the Church was, that S. Paul should go as it were out of his way, to convince his brethren in their alarm, that he himself also walked orderly, and kept the law. So exactly did the whole Church agree in spirit with the great Apostle himself, that one should become "all things to all men, if by any means" one "might save some."

And as this is the temper of S. Paul himself, and of the Church which he served, so also should it be the temper of each particular Christian, among his

^v Acts xxi.

own friends and acquaintance, and all whom the providence of God puts in his way. He will account it a part of charity to become all things to all men : to enter into their notions and feelings, not for any vain fancy of pleasing them and obtaining their good word, but for their profit, if haply by God's mercy he may be permitted to do something towards the salvation of a brother. And truly it is a strange power, which God's Holy Spirit gives to faithful self-denying persons, to enter into the thoughts and tempers and passions of those for whom they are concerned, even of those who are most unlike themselves ; guarding them by a kind of instinct, against those sins and temptations, which would seem to be furthest from their own feeling and knowledge ; as God and good Angels guard them, knowing, and in a manner feeling for the sinner, without any sort of communion in the sin. It ought to be an awful thought to any misled and guilty person, when he perceives, as a little observation most likely will cause him to perceive, that the best and purest souls are aware of the dangerousness of the sins, to which his secret heart is inclined, are aware of it, if not in his case, yet in some others. I say, it is an awful and serious thing, when any of us observe this : it ought to bring home to our minds this conviction, that the high invisible spirits who are watching around us, and yet more the Father of all spirits, both know our secret sins more perfectly, and hate them more entirely, than our good and thoughtful friends either know or hate the worst things, which we perceive them instinctively shuddering at and guarding against.

Thus the presence of a good man, and the seeing him careful to give no occasion of offence, in that very kind, perhaps, to which you know yourself inclined: this is a silent token of the immediate presence and future judgement of the Son of God with His holy Angels. How could God honour a frail earth-born sinner more, than to make him thus helpful in saving a soul from death?

Once more, very briefly: if it be asked, what is the way by which frail imperfect men may be fitted and enabled to understand the thoughts of the wicked, so as to perceive their tendency, and to pray and strive against them: the answer is, we must be very single in our aims,—not *looking*, much less *turning* back, after we have once given in our names to Jesus Christ, to be His soldiers and servants. Too late, alas! it is for most of us to think of resembling the Apostle after his Baptism, when, as he tells us, “he knew nothing of himself^{*}”;—he was not conscious of any wilful sin, to be a drawback on the completeness of God’s blessing: and so, going on with an untroubled and sincere mind, he was better able to discern and understand what his people were each of them really about: God’s Spirit was more ready to help him; and his precautions for his neighbour’s good, like those of good Angels, were more likely to be crowned with success. The secret, in a word, of S. Paul’s discerning of spirits, was his being pure in heart. For of the pure in heart our Lord promises, “they shall see God;” see Him present in all things, enlightening them in all their duty, both to Himself and to their brethren.

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

For very charity's sake then, as well as for fear of the dreadful Judgement, let us strive to keep our hearts clean, to root out with abhorrence the first slight growths of bad desire. Else, however good-natured we may seem to ourselves, and however useful outwardly to others, in the great and eternal charity, that of saving immortal souls, we must not expect to have any part. For when those who are wilfully impure try to help others to heaven, what is it but the blind leading the blind? the end of which our Lord has told us. Let us remember the prayer of the Psalmist, humbled to the dust by the sense of his great transgression: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. O give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free Spirit. Then" (and not till then) "shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee^b."

Let us remember also, that even this great saint had his exercises of voluntary self-denial, his regular fastings and mortifications to go through, in order to keep the grace given him. "I keep under my body," says he; I punish it, I deal roughly with it, I bring it into subjection, I train it as I would a stubborn slave; "lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway^c."

"If S. Paul speak thus, how much more we!" So exclaims an ancient writer: and so, I suppose, we must all feel. God give us grace to act accordingly!

^b Ps. li.

^c 1 Cor. ix. 27.

SERMON XII.

OUR NEED OF CONVERSION FROM THE SIN OF HINDERING GOD'S WORD.

CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.

GAL. i. 23, 24.

*“ They had heard only, that he which persecuted us
in times past, now preacheth the Faith which once
he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.”*

S. PAUL'S conversion, and the course of his life afterwards, might seem at first sight too extraordinary, too far out of the common course of things, to be of much use as an example to common persons, called to go regularly on in the daily duties of life. For when was such a thing heard of before, or since? A fierce persecutor and enemy of the Christians is on a journey to do them all the harm he can, “^a breathing out threatenings and slaughter” against them, and when he is on the very point of fulfilling his purpose, there shines round him a great light from heaven, he falls to the ground, he hears the voice of our Lord, reproving him for persecuting Himself in His saints; he sees Him, and the glory of that Light

^a Acts ix. 1.

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takes away his eyesight, until it is restored by a miracle: and being so humbled and converted, he begins presently to preach the Faith, which before he had destroyed. Jesus, Whom he had persecuted, he declares in the synagogues to be the very Son of God: and so he goes on, zealous and untired, to the very end of a long life, and ends his course by a glorious martyrdom: having so done his work, that he, above all others, has obtained for himself in the Church the name of Apostle, i. e. Christ's special messenger: so that when it is said, "the Apostle says this or that," every one, without his being named, thinks presently of S. Paul.

All this is very noble, very beautiful, very holy: but some of us may think, what have we to do with it, any more than to admire and thank God for it? How is an ordinary labourer, a farmer, a tradesman, a servant, or the wife, or child of such an one, called to follow such an example as S. Paul's?

I will try and make this plain to you, but I must beseech you to be very attentive.

Consider in earnest what conversion is: what we mean, when we say that Saul was on this day converted. We mean that he was turned from being against Christ to being on Christ's side. From His enemy, he became His dutiful and obedient servant. This, after all, is the one great division, which parts off the whole world to good or to evil here, and shall hereafter part them off to the right or left of the Judge's Throne; namely, whether they be friends or enemies of our Lord; whether or no they make it their business to please Him, and not themselves. Now although it is true in one sense, that we have all

been converted long ago;—for being made members of Christ at our Baptism, we were of course turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;—yet it is also too true, that the greater part of us have wilfully returned, more or less, towards our first evil condition: in some respect or other, we have forgotten that we were purged from our old sins; and so far we need, or have needed, conversion; so far as we set ourselves against Christ, by indulging any known sin, so far we are like S. Paul on his way to Damascus: and there is no chance of our salvation, except we be converted, and become as little children, submitting ourselves to the voice from heaven, the daily call of Christ in His Church, and with penitent hearts asking, “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? ”

All backsliders are so far like Saul, that they are enemies of Christ, and need conversion: but there is one case more especially like his, and by no means an uncommon one among Christians. You remember, those at least who are diligent with their Prayer-books will remember, that in one of the exhortations directing people how to prepare for the Holy Communion, mention is especially made of “ hinderers and slanderers of God's Word.” It is said, “ If any of you be a blasphemer of God, a hinderer or slanderer of His Word, an adulterer, or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime; repent you of your sins, or else come not to that Holy Table.” Who are these hinderers and slanderers of God's Word, whose sin is so very grievous, so that it is counted along with blasphemy, and adultery, malice, and envy, as unfitting men to receive Christ in His Sacrament?

Of course, the saying relates in part to those who find fault with the Creed, or any part of it, as it is set forth in the teaching of the Holy Church, and who try to set others against it. But of this matter, the matter of doctrine, I do not just now mean to speak. I wish rather to consider the case of persons, wilfully or thoughtlessly breaking any of the commandments, and when they are corrected, setting themselves against correction. We can see, most of us, in one or other of our acquaintance, more or less mischief of this sort; we can feel too much of it in ourselves. How common is it for persons to go on, well satisfied on the whole with the lives they are leading, perhaps for many years, sometimes even for the greater part of their lives, until the providence of Almighty God graciously warns them, in some way, that all is not so right as they think. Some friend speaks to them in a way they have not been used to; or they meet with some book, which puts things in a new light; or they hear things said in sermons, or in pastoral advice, which they never heard before, but cannot gainsay. I do not now speak of persons living in notoriously wicked ways, in fornication, or adultery, in drunkenness, or thieving, but of such as the world perhaps would call respectable, yet their lives are plainly not ordered by the strict rules of the Bible. They come to Church now and then, as it happens: and would be astonished themselves, if an account were kept, and shewn to them, to see how seldom they came. Of the Holy Communion they seldom think; still seldomer do they make up their minds to prepare themselves and attend it. Fasting, and voluntary self-denial, make no

part of their rule of life; they have never considered how much is said of it in Scripture, how distinctly it is set down in the Prayer-book: neither have they been accustomed to see it practised by those whom they looked up to. Accordingly, they have quite passed it over: when they have heard speak of it from time to time, or seen it mentioned in books, it has made absolutely no impression on their minds, no more than as if it had been a word uttered in a language they did not understand. In other matters they have been contented to give as good satisfaction to their neighbours as other respectable people about them: a bad word now and then, or a burst of ill-temper, whether passion or sullenness, has not much troubled them, nor have they taken much pains to correct it: because, in truth, it has never entered into their minds that in every thought, word and work they should try to please Christ. They have never used themselves to strict self-examination; they have not watched their own ways on every side, lest they should give offence to one or other of our Saviour's little ones. Thus they have gone on in an ordinary kind of manner, content to be no worse than other people, no worse this year than they were last year: but little indeed have they thought of going on unto perfection: little of keeping their eyes and thoughts in order; little of punishing and judging themselves for the faults, which they could not help being aware of; little, in short, of loving God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength. Their standard and measure has been sometimes the custom of their acquaintance in general; sometimes that of one or more persons in particular, whom they thought sensible, or other-

wise looked up to: sometimes, that which they saw in their own parents, or to which they had been otherwise bred up; sometimes, simply their habit and way, into which they had slidden, as it were, insensibly, as a child grows up in a certain shape, without knowing how. But whatever it is, which set them their rule, it *is* their rule, their fixed rule and measure, and they feel settled and grounded in it, as if they really *could* not walk by any other. The force of evil habit is upon them like a strong chain, drawn tight and held fast by the Evil spirit: and too often there is another chain too, by which he leads them captive; the miserable pride and naughtiness of our hearts, which makes us naturally so unwilling to own that we have been in the wrong: especially in such a matter as this: the very rule and measure of a man's whole life.

Now in all this there is something which may put us in mind of the thoughts and feelings, with which Saul must have been tried, while he was yet an unconverted Jew, employed in putting down the Faith and persecuting the saints. Why he did so, he has himself told us^b. He was exceedingly zealous of the tradition of his fathers. He had made up his mind, that the way he was brought up in, and used to, was the only right and good way, and that any thing which professed to be better than it, and called people away from it, must be either hypocrisy or a kind of madness. When the Name of Christ was made known, when the holy Church began to prevail, and men and women by thousands declared that they had found a better trust than the law of Moses:

^b Gal. i. 14.

this eager young man could not endure it: he presently began to rage, and persecute, verily thinking that he ought to do so: until it pleased God, as on this day, to reveal His Son to him, that He might preach Him among the Gentiles. Thus for the time he was "a hinderer and slanderer of God's word."

Recollect now the sort of imperfect Christians, of whom I was just now speaking: some of them perhaps not much nearer to true Christian doctrine, even in their opinions, than the Jew, Saul of Tarsus: and scarce any of them, surely, so exact as he was, in doing what they knew to be right. How are they apt to behave, when in any manner their old ways are disturbed, and purer and stricter rules sounded in their ears? Something in their heart tells them, that there is truth in the unwelcome message: their consciences are seldom so entirely benumbed, but they have a feeling it must go ill with them, if the sayings of our Lord and His Apostles are indeed to be the rule, whereby they shall be judged. But pride, and ill habit too generally prevail against these godly motions of the Spirit: and in order to silence them, and keep themselves quiet in their old ways, they begin to talk against the truths which they cannot receive, and to make others dislike them also, and so, before they are aware of it, they become, in their several ways, "hinderers and slanderers of God's word."

Thus, suppose any one who, as I just now said, has lived in neglect of the Holy Communion, although our Lord said, "Do this in remembrance of Me:" or of fasting, although, in the Sermon on the Mount, it

• S. Luke xxii. 19.

is mentioned as being quite as necessary as prayer. When such a negligent person is reminded of the known word and will of Christ, and yet will not make up his mind to do it, presently the devil will put words in his mouth, of scorn or discouragement towards others, who perhaps are better inclined. Old persons, sometimes even parents, will in this way check the young, of themselves, it may be, well-disposed to come to Christ's Altar. They will say, "There is time enough yet: you had better wait till you are older: many a person who does not communicate is just as good as those who do." Or if they see any one disposed to deny himself in the way of fasting, they will, more or less openly, put him out of countenance, will say words to make him think scornfully of the duty, and of those who practise it. Who can deny that, by so doing, men take their part with the hinderers and slanderers of God's Word? Who can say how long the mischief of their rash sayings may endure, when they lightly allow themselves to speak against that, without which, for aught they know, neither they nor such as hear them can be saved? Who would wish to die with such a burthen upon his soul, that he should not only have ventured for his own part to pass by the severer and more difficult sayings of our Lord, but should even have kept back others, better inclined to do His Will?

No doubt, the blessed Apostle was partly moved by such thoughts as these, bitter thoughts of what he had done against our Lord, when after his conversion he entered so eagerly on the work of preaching the Gospel. He remembered, how he had imprisoned, and beaten in every synagogue them that

called on Christ, and how, when the blood of S. Stephen was shed, he was standing by, and consenting to his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him ^d. These sad recollections made him the more earnest to win souls to Christ, not caring what he suffered for His sake. O my brethren, should it please our Saviour to touch any one of us at any time with a sense of neglected duty, or (what is still worse) of having hindered God's Word in others, what a moment of trial will that be for us ! What a difference will it make to us through all eternity, whether we resist, or encourage those breathings of the Spirit ! O let not Satan, at such a time, tempt us, for sloth or for pride's sake, again to hinder that saving Word from having its free course. Let us, like S. Paul, lose not a moment, but humbly and sincerely enquire, "e Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" And having got the answer, let us set about doing it at once, though it may seem hard at first. Let us thankfully begin, if such be His Will, as S. Paul began, with suffering, and penance, and shame. Let us not spare to own before men, how wrong, how mistaken we have been : how, when we were most pleased with ourselves, we were slighting Christ's holy laws, and hindering His Word. Let us bind ourselves to be all the more watchful, as long as we live, to promote the free course of that Word, i. e. to practise ourselves, and encourage in others, every thing that He would have done. Thus, by His miraculous mercy, we may redeem the time lost, and the mischief we have done. Angels and saints, rejoicing in our timely change, may glorify God even in such as we are.

^d Acts xxii. 20, 21.^e Ib. ix. 6.

SERMON XIII.

S. PAUL'S EXAMPLE, A PROTECTION TO THOSE WHO
ARE CONSCIOUS OF A TRUE CONVERSION.

CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.

1 COR. XV. 9, 10.

"I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am."

THIS feast of the Conversion of S. Paul suits well with the Epiphany season. For Epiphany means manifestation, the Manifestation of Jesus Christ, and He manifests Himself more especially in the conversion, or turning of sinful men to Himself: and most especially in the conversion of such an one as S. Paul, who had made himself, as it were, a chief of sinners, in that he took a chief part in that great sin of persecuting our Lord. And besides, S. Paul was converted for this very purpose, that he might be sent to the Gentiles, to all nations, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: that is, that by his preaching there might be a great Epiphany, a great manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles; or, as it is in



our collect for the day, the "light of the Gospel might shine throughout the world." Thus in two ways the Conversion of S. Paul is a feast of Epiphany to us: it is a feast of thanksgiving for the general spreading of the Gospel, and it is also a feast, wherein we are each of us to thank our Lord for manifesting Himself to us particularly. And this is the sense, in which I would wish to speak of it to you to-day. I want you to think of conversion, as of our Lord's bringing home His Epiphany to the heart and soul of each one of us. Even as S. Paul describes his own conversion in a letter, which he wrote many years after: "It pleased God," he says, "to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen^a." Conversion is, when Christ is revealed *in* a man, when a man's whole heart and soul and body are so turned to the Lord Jesus, that any one who knew of it might be quite sure it was the work of Christ dwelling in that man by His Spirit. Christ may be revealed *to* a man, he may feel quite certain that the Creed and the Bible are true, and so without falsehood may profess, and call himself a Christian, and yet his heart and his inclinations, his wishes and his practice, may continue unchanged, as worldly and as sensual as ever. He is not then converted, Christ is not yet revealed in him: but when he has so accepted and embraced the inward teaching of Christ's Spirit, as to be to Him a little child, meek, humble, trustful, obedient, innocent or longing to be so, then Christ has begun to be revealed in him, then he has begun to be converted indeed. S. Paul was converted in both these senses by the sudden and wonderful

^a Gal. i. 16.

call, which he received on his way to Damascus. He both outwardly believed the Creed, which he had before altogether scorned, and also began to be humbled and softened in heart, deeply humbled before our Lord Jesus Christ. We, my brethren, all of us, I dare say, have long ago had Christ revealed to us. We have all known more or less of the Gospel from our youth up. It came to us, as the saying is, with our mother's milk. In this sense we do not need to be converted: so far as we know of the Gospel, we believe it; but in another sense, we all, more or less, need to be converted. We are none of us entirely turned towards Jesus Christ, in that childlike way which He delights in: and as far as we fall short in that, so far we need conversion. Some, I fear, are not at all turned towards Him. They are taken up with money, or pleasure, or something else which is only of this world: or they are living in some deadly sin, in some one or more of those bad ways, which He has told us do, as long as they last, quite make a parting between Him and us. Such persons need entire conversion. They are on the broad way, with their faces toward Babylon, and they have need to be put into the narrow way, with their faces toward Sion. This was S. Paul's case, when he was Saul of Tarsus, before Christ had revealed Himself to him. His face was turned not only away, but even against our Lord. In one sense indeed, S. Paul was very different from the wilful sinners among Christians, whose case we are now considering. When we do wrong knowingly, we sin against the grace of the Holy Ghost actually given to us in Holy Baptism. But S. Paul had not yet received that grace. And

again, we, in our deadly sin, know for certain that we are wrong. The adulterer, the fornicator, the unclean, the thief, the liar, the blasphemer, the undutiful child, the malicious and envious man, all know very well that they are wrong. Not one of them thinks, that in such behaviour he is pleasing God and doing his duty. The most that Christians flatter themselves with, when they get into such ways, is that their sin is pardonable, and God is very merciful. But Saul “^bverily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.” It was a strange thought, as we all now perceive, but he really did think it in his heart and in his conscience. He did it ignorantly; he knew no better. And he seems to say that this was one circumstance, which caused him to obtain mercy, viz. his doing it “^cignorantly and in unbelief.” It would have been far worse, had he done it, as our deadly sins are done, against our own better knowledge and faith. But what was it which caused so sensible a man as Saul, so serious, so well-intentioned, so careful, and blameless in his behaviour; what was it which caused such an one to make so great a mistake; to persecute Christ’s way even to the death? Because he thought it was contrary to God’s way revealed in the law. He thought that by keeping the law of Moses, he or any other Jew could make himself good. But our Lord and His Gospel say, “You cannot make yourself good, you cannot be righteous before God by keeping the law; your goodness, your righteousness must come another way; you must be united to Jesus Christ, God made Man; you

^b Acts xxvi. 9.

^c 1 Tim. i. 13.

must be made a member of Him by His Holy Spirit, and so be made partakers of the Atonement which He has made for you." This is the Gospel ; but Saul was zealous for the law, and as I said, thought, as the whole people of the Jews thought, that he could make himself good by keeping it. He therefore accounted the Gospel blasphemy, and set his face against our Saviour. And in this he was a kind of type of the whole Jewish nation : of whom he himself bears witness, that they had "^d a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they (he goes on) being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God;" i. e. they thought they could make themselves good, and therefore would not come to Christ to be made good. Just as, I fear, there are many among Christians at this time, who think they can become good by a way of man's devising, by their own inward faith and feeling, and so will not submit themselves to the righteousness of God, will not come after that goodness, which He offers them by His Holy Spirit in the humble and faithful use of His Church and Sacraments.

Well ; this was Saul's mistake : this was what set him forward so earnestly, or even furiously, on that journey to Damascus, of which you heard just now in the Gospel. But now see what has come of it. This was his mind in the morning, and all the forenoon : but at mid-day he was turned in a single moment : not for any gain of this world, for he lost all he had in the world by it ; the credit and power of being a learned Pharisee, high in his nation ; the comforts

^d Rom. x. 2, 3.

of home, all quiet and security of life ; whatever he had in the way of property ; for, from thenceforth, he was content to live a poor life by the labour of his hands, now and then helped by the alms of the faithful : all this loss he willingly underwent from this day forward. And why ? Because he had seen our Lord, and our Lord told him this was what he must do. After this he lived, as it seems, somewhere about thirty years, and his whole time was spent in preaching Christ, and in waiting upon His members ; often in prison, always in sufferings, generally in immediate danger of death. He “^e counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, for Whom he suffered the loss of all things, and did count them but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in Him.” Such is his own account of himself.

Now, of course, the great and holy Apostle could not fail to be aware of this wonderful change, which the Spirit of God wrought in his heart on the appearance of our Lord to him. And we find that it was never for a moment out of his mind. How could it ? since he even saw our Saviour with his bodily eyes, and became personally acquainted with Him. What a thing was that for him to remember ! Besides the entire change, which that moment made in his life. So too among ourselves, if any Christian person have unhappily given way to deadly sin, especially that most ordinary sin of irreligion, lukewarmness, forgetfulness of God, and then the Almighty, by some turn of His gracious providence, calls that man to repentance, and he obeys the call, of course the person

^e Phil. iii. 7—9.

himself in many cases is aware of it at the time, and remembers it afterwards: one man remembers the sickness which came upon him, and was very sore, even (as it seemed) unto death: what alarm, what terror at the thought of death and judgement came upon him as he lay on his bed, and how he sent for the minister of God, and, if need were, confessed his sins, and so made a beginning of repentance. Another remembers, how his heart died down within him in the midst of his worldly prosperity, on account of the death of some dear friend, or the sudden judgements of God striking down some one or more very near him; how he thought to himself, "We know not whose turn may be next," and how from that time, he made it his business to try to be better prepared than he was then. Another was greatly struck by some good advice which he heard at Church, or read out of a good book: the Lord, it may be, put an open Bible in his way, and he read something in it which gave his mind a new turn; it proved, by God's mercy, the beginning of a happy change in him. In short, there is no end of the good and gracious ways, which the Almighty Lord employs to deliver our souls from death, and our feet from falling: to help us, when we, like Israel, have destroyed ourselves. And many of these ways and helps are such, that the persons benefitted by them both perceive them at the time, and clearly remember them afterwards. Many, I say, not all of them. For sometimes God's way of turning persons from evil to good is so slow and gradual, that not even themselves, much less any other, can say exactly, at what moment and in what manner the happy and desireable change

began: although, after a time, it become surely known by the blessed fruits of amendment and holiness of life. Now, whether the change was gradual or sudden, it seems that when there has been a real change from direct sin and irreligion to faith and repentance, the person cannot fail to be aware of it. His very self-examinations which he practises daily, especially before Holy Communion, must make him aware of God's gracious work going on in his own heart and life. A blessed and hopeful condition indeed, yet not without its own special trials and dangers, as no condition can be in this world. I wish to mention some of these trials and dangers, and to shew you how S. Paul's example, if we will attend to it, may help us to get over them. Take notice, I am speaking especially of true conversions, like that of S. Paul; cases in which people have really and truly turned from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. I am not speaking of those cases; alas! too many, in which persons, going on in some grievous sin, yet dream that they have been converted, because they think of divine things more and more earnestly than they used, or because they have come to take delight in religious services, or in good books, or because they seem to themselves to have faith and trust in our Saviour. I am not speaking of such cases as those, but of real amendments, real conversions. You may be sure, the devil will do his worst to destroy all the benefit of them. He cannot bear to have souls won from his power to the love and service of God; the unclean spirit, when turned out, can have no rest, until he have returned unto the place, from which he is expelled: and therefore he will be very busy with his

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snare to ruin those who, like S. Paul, have distinctly turned from sin, and cannot fail to know something of their conversion.

One thing, of course, he will sorely try them with, he will set them upon thinking much of themselves, and of their amendment, as if it was their own doing: as if God had some especial partiality towards them, so that they need not be in much fear of falling: as if He would take care of them, whether they watched in humble fear, or no. Many a sincere convert, it is to be feared, has fallen from his blessed place by thinking too confidently of his own conversion. A sad case, to fall down like a star from heaven, and be lost in the blackness of darkness for ever. How may a man guard against it? Look to the pattern of converts, the great Apostle S. Paul. Never did any man think more of his own conversion than he. But to what end? To please himself? To make himself secure, and confident? Nay, it was always that he might humble and abase himself: not in word, for that is very easy, and very easily counterfeited, but in thought, and feeling, and in very deed, “^d I thank Christ Jesus my Lord, for that He accounted me faithful, putting me into the ministry: who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.” “^e Concerning zeal, I was persecuting the Church. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Not as though I had already attained, either were already made perfect. Brethren, I count not myself to have attained but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things

^d 1 Tim. i. 12, 13.

^e Phil. iii. 6, 12, 13.

which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And in another letter, "f Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it. . . . But it pleased God to reveal His Son in me." And here in the text, writing to the Corinthians "Last of all," Christ "was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God, I am what I am." Here we see the nature of true humility; that it is in reality no more than just taking things as they are. S. Paul, going back in thought to his own conversion, is humble, and cannot in the least value himself, because God, in answer to his prayers, has opened his eyes to see that his conversion was no credit to him; it was simply God's mercy, calling him by name, and staying him, when he was perhaps about to fill up the measure of his sin. So might it well be with any one of us Christians, who may be tempted to think much of his own spiritual progress. Let him think with himself, where should I be now, if God had passed me over? And again, where ought I to be; in how much higher a place of goodness than I am, if I had not been wanting on my part to His infinite goodness? O, if we would but take back our thoughts in earnest to our own poor miserable beginnings; to what we were, when our Lord first took us by the hand, how impossible would it be for the best and most favoured among men to indulge pride of any sort, but most especially spiritual pride!

^f Gal. i. 13, 15, 16.

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Again, the Evil one, if he can, will embitter the souls of God's servants with scornful thoughts towards others. As soon as ever a man has got rid of bad ways and shameful errors, he is tempted to judge and speak disdainfully of those, who still continue in the same sin or mistake; lately, perhaps, his own companions. This is a very bad sign, and would at once be corrected, if S. Paul's example were attended to. See, how gently and lovingly he bore himself towards his brethren the Jews, remembering that he had lately been, as they were. “^s My heart's desire, and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” “^h I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites.” “ⁱ Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite.” Those, of whom he spoke so affectionately, were all the while seeking his life; they hated him, as they did none other.

Thus the blessed Apostle S. Paul guarded the treasure given him in his conversion against the crafts of the Evil one: he would neither praise himself in his heart for it, nor scorn others who had not received it: his only care was, to make the most of it for their sake. Would you know the secret of this, his good mind? It was love. Because he loved sinners, he could not scorn them, even for their sins: and because he loved Christ, he thought nothing of what he had done, or ever could do, to please Christ. So it

^s Rom. x. 1, 2.^h Ib. ix. 2, 3, 4.ⁱ Ib. xi. 1.

must be with us, if our spiritual affairs are to go right. We must look back on our own natural lost state, and think well Who delivered us from it, until our hearts burn within us. Those who, through sin and unbelief, are yet in darkness, and the shadow of death, we must pity and pray for, and help them as we may : but never lose our patience with them, nor cease praying that we may love them more and more. This is being followers of S. Paul, as he was of Christ. God make us all such, that we, with him and all true converts, having the mind of little children, may abide for ever in the kingdom of heaven !

SERMON XIV.

CHRIST'S PURIFYING PRESENCE.

PURIFICATION OF S. MARY THE VIRGIN.

MALACHI iii. 2.

“Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand, when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ sope.”

THESE words, undoubtedly, at first hearing, carry the mind forward to the great and dreadful Day. As we read or hear them, we naturally think of the God of all purity, coming down from heaven with that searching fire, which He has assured us He will employ, to try and prove “^a every man’s work, of what sort it is.” We think of our own dread, and anguish, and sinking of spirit, should we be found at that day unprepared, impure in the sight of Him, Who, as S. Paul speaks, “^b is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and Who pierceth even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart:” Whose fires, therefore, have power, not only to waste our living bodies, but to enter into our very souls.

^a 1 Cor. iii. 13.

^b Heb. iv. 12.

What if we, too, after all that has been done to purge us, should turn out mere dross, unpurified, ungodly, as we were born in the earth, or worse; how shall we be able to stand that Refiner's fire?

Again; it is said also, that our Lord at His coming shall be like "fullers' sope:" sparing no kind of filthiness; utterly cleansing and whitening all that is washed with it. It is a parable, made homely and familiar on purpose, that we may thoroughly understand it, and very often be put in remembrance of it. It is intended to set us on thinking, "What if we and our doings should be found stains on the white vesture of the Church, spots in our Lord's feast of charity?" In such a case we see by this verse, how speedy and how final our judgement will be. The Lord will endure us no longer, but will cast us off from Himself, and from His holy Body, the Church, which cannot be taken up to heaven, until it is clean, and cannot be clean, while anything impure, sinful, or disobedient abides in it.

Undoubtedly, therefore, we do well, reading the words of the prophet in the text, to remember with awe the day, when He will come to be our Judge: yet those words may be also not ill understood of our Saviour's coming near a man, or near His Church, in any way.

God never reveals Himself as closely approaching sinners, without putting them to proof and trial, more or less resembling that, by which metals are tried in the fire. This was more especially shewn, when He became Incarnate, and came so very near our sinful nature, as actually to take it upon Him. The Human Nature in Him became, as it were, by

the touch of His Godhead, throughly and entirely purged from all dross of sin, of corrupt desire and weakness. From the very birth He was quite pure, because, though He was the Son of Mary, He was also the Son of God, and it is impossible for God to sin, or have fellowship with sin.

Therefore, even in that day of His humiliation, those who knew or felt Him to be the Son of God, and themselves sinners, trembled before Him, and would fain have got away from His Presence. They could not "abide the day of His coming;" they could not "stand when He appeared." The devils cried out, "Let us alone:" "we beseech Thee, torment us not." A whole city, at one time, "besought Him to depart out of their coasts." S. Peter himself, overpowered by the sense of His Majesty, fell down at His knees, and besought Him, "'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'" This was in the devils the fear of direct punishment: not so, I should think, only nor chiefly, in the others. It might rather be their overwhelming awe, at finding the eye of Purity fixed on them: they were dazzled, as the sight is by the sun, which by its beams seems to enter in, and mingle with the very substance of the eye.

That the prophet in the text meant this kind of continued presence, and not simply Christ's final coming, and the fire of the last day, is the more probable for two reasons: first, that he connects this purifying Presence of our Lord with the sending of His message to prepare the way before Him, which, as we know by the New Testament, related to the

• S. Luke v. 8.

coming of S. John the Baptist. Secondly, he speaks of Him, not as a destroyer but as a refiner, a refiner especially of the priests, the sons of Levi, who should thenceforth "offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." This seems to tell us of some unspeakable mercy of His, to temper, as it were, the natural effects (so to call them) of His purity coming in contact with us sinners, so as that He may be in us, and with us, a fire not to consume, but to refine. Such was His veiling Himself, as He did at His first coming. We could not have seen His face, His Divine Nature, openly, and lived; but we are so far favoured, like Moses, that we are permitted to see His back parts, the outskirts of His great glory, shrouded by the curtain of His flesh. This we see, and to This we are brought near, and with This we even communicate; and so is fulfilled in every faithful soul, that which Moses saw typified in the bush; "the glory of the Lord burned there, and it was not consumed." The God of purity abides in man's nature, and it is not destroyed, but purified.

The course of the Church Services for to-day leads us to consider our Lord and Saviour in this particular character, as a refiner and purifier of men, both by the prophecy in the text, which connects His first coming to the temple with His purpose of cleansing God's people; by the ceremony itself, in which our Lord and His blessed Mother took part, as on this day; and by the sort of persons, whom He graciously admitted to bear a part in that ceremony, and to be in attendance on Him, on this His first solemn entrance into His holy place.

First, the prophecy is express. "The Lord shall

suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger," or Angel, "of the covenant; but who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."

Here it is plain, that in some way or other, the first coming of the Lord to His new temple; new, when Malachi wrote; should be connected with some great purification, which was to take place in His Church, the consequence of which would be, that He would be fully reconciled to His fallen people. "Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years."

Next, consider the ceremony itself of the Purification. It consisted, we know, of two parts. First, the blessed Virgin Mother brought to the temple-door a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt-offering, which was to be destroyed by fire; as an acknowledgment of what sinners deserve at the hands of the Almighty, and how entirely they are bound to yield themselves up to any punishment, which He in His just judgement shall ordain. The other dove or pigeon was, in like manner, to be killed and offered before the Lord, but instead of its being all consumed by fire, it was to be eaten by the priest or the person sacrificing; by which law of the sin-offering, I suppose, God intended to foreshew the way of communion, which He would one day appoint; that Jesus Christ, the true Sin-offering, should not only die for us, but also

be our spiritual food and sustenance in His most Holy Sacrament.

Now the woman who, after childbirth, offered up this sin-offering, did thereby acknowledge the stain of sin, which cleaves inseparably to the conception and birth of all children, descended from Adam and Eve in the ordinary way, according to the psalmist's confession, "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me."

Again: she acknowledged, that her only hope of purification from this or any other sinful stain, her only chance of coming before the Lord and treading His courts without sin, depended on a pure Offering, Whose Blood was to be poured out before the Lord, and of Whose Flesh the worshippers themselves were to partake at the hands of God's priests. That is, whether the person so sacrificing understood as much herself or no, she did in effect acknowledge, that her hope of acceptance lay in the Blood of Christ, and in communion with Him. Thus our Lord was foreshewn as the Great Purifier of the Church, both by His Blood sprinkled thereon, and by His holy Flesh, whereof we were to communicate.

But there was also another ceremony to be performed by the newly-delivered mother, to which the offering for herself was, as it seems, but introductory. Supposing her to be a mother for the first time, as was now the case with the Holy Virgin, she was to acknowledge her child holy to the Lord, by bringing him to Jerusalem, God's own place, there to present him to the Lord. For from the time when the people came out of Egypt, God had declared the first-born of the Israelites to be every one holy to Himself, in

memory of that great deliverance, which He wrought by smiting the first-born of the Egyptians, and saving those of the Israelites. From that day forward, every male child that opened the womb was holy to the Lord, and was to be offered before Him, and redeemed at a certain rate.

It is not hard to see the meaning of this law, what it taught God's people in elder times, and what it ought to teach us now. What so precious to a father or mother, as their first-born male child? By offering him, then, to Almighty God, they acknowledged themselves bound to sacrifice to Him whatever they most valued and loved most dearly. It was in action the same as the words of David, "I will not offer a sacrifice to the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing." It is a plain lesson to all who would come near God worthily, that they can only do so by denying themselves.

But of this I shall have to say a word presently, when I have just pointed out what there was peculiar in the Virgin's offering to-day, as compared with all other sacrifices of the same kind, which have ever been offered either before or since.

The other Israelitish mothers offered, in acknowledgement and expiation of the sin, which they had communicated to the infant newly-born. But the holy Mother of our Lord needed not to make any such confession. Her offspring was pure and untainted, and had no occasion to be expiated. What are we, then, to understand by her sacrifice, over and above its being an expression of great humility and obedience? Surely we cannot be wrong in understanding this, that by it God's providence did, in

effect, place her at the head of all Christian mothers, who from time to time should come to offer the solemn and joyful sacrifice of thanksgiving, for deliverance from the great pain and peril of child-birth, and for the blessing of a new-born infant. Even as in Holy Baptism, the minister, receiving the child from the parent or nurse, is a token, apt, and intended to remind us, of our Saviour taking up the infants in His arms, to lay His hands on them and bless them ; so each woman who comes to kneel at God's altar, with her thank-offering, according to the order of the Church, is a visible token and memorial of the Blessed Virgin, the chosen emblem of the Church, and, in a certain sense, the mother of all God's children on earth, offering up her sacrifice, not of expiation (for there was no sin to expiate) but of thanksgiving.

On such occasions it would be a good thing, a devout, as well as a joyful and pleasant thought, if Christian mothers and their friends would call up in their minds that sacred moment, when the Holy Family brought their acknowledgement to the Father, for the birth of the Holy Child Jesus. They would do well not to think themselves alone, but to feel sure that in spirit and intention the whole Church is giving thanks with them. What a pity it is, if any forfeit the blessing and comfort of such thoughts as these, by coming lightly and of mere custom ; by considering little, and soon forgetting !

Again : the offering of the Blessed Virgin differed infinitely from all others, in the worth of the First-born, Whom she presented to her God. The rest could only say, "Of Thine own have we given Thee:"

but she could say, "I give Thee, O Lord, Thyself." But the thought, like all other thoughts belonging to this mysterious relation of the Son of God to His Virgin Mother, is too transporting, too high, for our words and understandings both. Thus much, however, we may perhaps with reason believe, that her sacrifice was the top of all sacrifices, which any but the Eternal High Priest Himself could offer, and that parents especially may, in remembrance of it, encourage themselves in parting with their children for God's sake.

And here we come back to the great practical lesson, which the whole of this sacred and solemn transaction was meant to teach us and all Christians. Those who would serve God in His temple worthily, must be purified by communion with His Son: and this communion is not in such sort God's gift, that we are to do nothing towards it ourselves. Our Lord has given us to understand, that some are fit for the kingdom of God; some go into it before others. Who are they? We may know, by observing the kind of persons, whom God's special providence assembled together in His Temple, to wait on His First-born Son, on His solemn entry and presentation therein. The persons found able to abide the day of His coming, the souls who could stand upright when He appeared, were such as His pure and blessed Mother, presenting her very best to Him Who gave it, with a willing heart: a heart, not the less willing and devout, because she was given to understand that some secret of calamity and sore trial was hereafter to be revealed to her, as the price of the mighty and unspeakable blessing she was receiving. "A

sword" was to "pierce through her own soul also." The Holy Family was not to be a family of mere peace and quiet enjoyment, but rather out of it was to go forth the greatest division and disturbance, that Israel had yet seen: the Divine Child, its hope and glory, was to be a sign spoken against. Thus the very act of most joyful thanksgiving was tempered, in the holy Virgin's case, with a strong effort of submission and self-denial. While she felt herself most favoured of the children of Adam, she was made to feel also, that more would be required of her in the way of self-denial, than could be required of any other. So it is always, and with all. The greater God's mercies, spiritual or temporal, the more entirely must we sacrifice ourselves, deny ourselves the present enjoyment of them, if we seek to make the most of them as they really are.

Mark again who those were, who waited round on this day, and were the chosen witnesses of the Lord's coming, thus for the first time, to His temple.

There was Joseph, His Mother's husband, a good and just man, whose praise is in the holy Gospel, for considerate dealing with those whom he supposed to be in error, for exact obedience to God's commands, whether he learned them out of the Scriptures, or understood them by dream or message from heaven; and of whom the Church has ever believed, that he lived as a brother with the Blessed Virgin, from honour and reverence of the Incarnation of our Lord.

There was aged Simeon, just and devout, content to wait long for the Consolation of Israel, and no less content to depart in peace, when his eyes had seen that Holy Child.

There was Anna the prophetess, of a great age, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

Here, my brethren, are the tempers we should encourage, here are the practices in which we should train ourselves, if we would come worthily into God's temple, into the immediate presence of our Lord. We cannot withdraw ourselves. As baptized Christians, even now we are in close communion with Him. If we will not, according to our poor weak measure, work along with His refining fire, while He still gives us space of trial, we have nothing else to look for, but His devouring fire at the day of judgement.

These heavenly dispositions our Lord did in fact bestow upon us, when He gave us, in Holy Baptism, His Spirit, Whose fruits they are. We were then presented unto Him in His temple. He graciously accepted us, and gave us pure and clean hearts. If we have since stained and polluted the hearts, which His grace had cleansed: if we have defiled our own souls and bodies, the temples of His regenerating Spirit; there yet remains no other way to us but only the way of purity. Whatever toil, whatever self-denial, whatever watching, fasting, and prayer, it costs us, we must somehow obtain His grace, the grace of purity, once again; else there is no hope of our finding Him a merciful High Priest, to present us at last to His Father.

And this is not a work to be done in a moment. If God's most faithful and innocent servants, they who seemed fittest to stand before Him, felt the sharpness of His refining fire; if the Holy Virgin

was to find a sword piercing her very soul ; if Simeon had to wait long, and Anna to serve with fastings and prayers night and day, both bowed down with extreme age, and making God's house, as it seems, their home ; how thankfully ought we to welcome any pain, any disappointment, loss, poverty, affliction, unkindness, which our good God may send upon us, in the hope that it may have a purifying effect on our fallen souls ! How ought we to busy ourselves, though late and very imperfectly, yet as thoroughly as we can, in prayer and good thoughts, and keeping ourselves strictly in order !

What have such as we are to do with enjoying life ? Surely it were better to be ever " watchful, strengthening the things which remain and are ready to die¹." For, too certainly, the works of most of us are as yet most imperfect before God, most unworthy of the baptismal grace which He freely gave us.

¹ Rev. iii. 2.

SERMON XV.

TEACHINGS OF THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

S. LUKE ii. 22.

“And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.”

It pleased our Divine Lord and Saviour, not only to take on Him our Flesh, but also to go through, in His own Person, the different stages of our earthly and mortal life. As Elijah quickened the dead body of the widow's child, by stretching himself upon it, putting his mouth upon the child's mouth, and his hands upon his hands, and his bosom upon his bosom, so Jesus Christ sanctified the condition of man on earth, applying Himself to it in every part, one after another. All the events therefore of His Life are, in some sense, a type and pattern of ours: or rather ours are faint shadows of His. He has won a blessing for them all, on condition of our remembering Him in all.

To-day, for example, two things happened in the Holy Family, each whereof has its shadow conti-

nually taking place in ordinary families. The one was the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the other the Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the temple. The Virgin's Purification is shadowed before our eyes continually by what is called the Churching of women. A Christian mother, coming to give thanks for preservation in the great pain and peril of childbirth, is a token before our eyes of that pure and blessed one, coming into the temple with a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, her poor but devout acknowledgement of the greatest honour and most unspeakable bliss, that had ever been vouchsafed to a fallen child of Adam. And since the greater part of those who so come are very poor, let them take comfort in their poverty by the remembrance of S. Mary's poor and scanty offering, the sure proof of the great poverty of her home, the home of Jesus Christ. Some of them are apt to be too full of care, pondering how they shall provide for so many: but here they see how Christ made Himself and His Mother poor; and surely it will be well with their little ones, if they are as Christ, and with themselves, if they are as Christ's Mother.

You have seen what may constantly remind us of the Virgin's Purification. Now what have we before our eyes, which may in like manner shadow Christ's Presentation in the temple? Our Baptism surely in the first place; for then are we first solemnly presented to God. Then Christ's Minister takes us up, and blesses God for us, holding us in his arms. Our Lord's Circumcision was a type and figure of God's work wrought in us at our Baptism: His Presentation is rather a figure of our parents and friends

accepting God's favour, and solemnly giving us up to Him. And this you parents do in reality, whether you and your children think of it or no, every time you bring them to Church, every time you take charge of them, while prayers are being said, every time you set them on saying the Catechism, or offer them to receive any such instruction. For by so doing, you do in a manner put them for a time into the hands of that heavenly Parent, Who taught you all the love you have to them: as the blessed S. Mary put the Divine Child into the Hands of the Heavenly Father: and at the same time expressed her willingness to part with Him hereafter for a time, by meekly listening to Simeon's prophecy of the bitter pangs, she should one day endure on His account. And therefore this Feast of the Purification is the natural end of the joyful time of Christmas. It is the last of those festival days, which bring our Lord before us as a little Child. Henceforth we go on to look upon Him tempted in the wilderness, fasting, in reproach, agonised in the garden, suffering on the Cross. The first time of great joy is over, and the time of sorrow and trial is at hand. The green boughs are removed out of the Church, and will not be set up there again until Easter Eve. The Virgin Mother has been warned of her time of mourning, and it must go on, more or less, until she has heard say, "He is risen from the dead."

One thought therefore, which may well come into a Christian's mind, when he contemplates our Lord, thus coming to His temple as an Infant, is the mixture of joy and sorrow, of resignation and thankfulness, when Christian parents, in any manner, part

with their children to Jesus Christ; and not only in respect of parents and children, but also when elder Christians part with younger ones whom they love, or are called away from them. Besides the blessed Mother of our Lord, there is another in that holy company, who may teach us that Christian mind. She brings Him to the temple to part with Him: the devout Simeon, who takes Him up in his arms, is soon to go away himself. It may remind us of what we often see at christenings, when some of those who wait upon the infant are in comparison very aged persons. Indeed every aged Christian, man or woman, waiting on an infant at home or in Church, is to thoughtful minds a shadow of that, which was seen in the temple that day. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then the old Simeon, who had been long waiting for Him, took Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Simeon, it is likely, knew not *what* he held in his arms. Though he knew by the Holy Ghost, that It was "the Lord's Christ," there is no reason to suppose he as yet knew, Who the Lord's Christ is, how great and glorious! not only the very Son of the Highest, but Himself the Most High God Incarnate! Simeon knew not Whom he held in his arms, dearly as he prized, and highly as he honoured Him: neither surely do the persons whom we see, whether young or old, carrying infants, rightly consider what they bear in their arms. We none of us consider, as we ought, what a baptized child is, how near to God, how truly one

with Christ. It is a glory and a mystery which we cannot rightly come up to in this world ; no, not after many years of faithful obedience ; much less when our ways have been such as to separate us from Christ, and dim the light of faith. However, very aged Christians do seem to be rewarded for their steady walking with Christ in His Ordinances by this among other special blessings, that they generally, without exactly understanding it themselves, feel more of the sacred presence of Jesus Christ in young children : and partly for this cause, and partly for another which I will mention, there is somewhat peculiarly awful and touching, something which comes unusually near a considerate person's heart, in the sight of a very old Christian nursing or watching a baptized infant. It reminds one especially, as one looks on, of the descriptions in the Old Testament of God's own fostering love. " ^a The beloved of the Lord," Benjamin, the youngest of the family, " shall dwell in safety by Him ; and the Lord shall cover him all day long, and he shall dwell between His Shoulders ; " i. e. on the Bosom of the Eternal nursing Father.

But over and above this, there is, as I said, another reason, why such an uniting of youth and age, the hoary head and the sucking child, ought to fill us with deep and devout thoughts. The reason is, it brings God very near us. He is, in a manner, peculiarly present in both. The sight of the old man, from his very age, may well put us in mind of that awful Presence : because we know for certain, that before long, even according to what we reckon long,

^a Deut. xxxiii. 12.

he will be with God, in that way in which the dead are with Him: in that fearful way, which it thrills us so to think of, nakedly and openly, no veil of flesh between the soul and Him. When we see an old grey-headed man, it ought to put us in mind of that other world, and of Him Whom we shall see there, as naturally as the sight of a friend ready dressed for a journey would put us in mind of that journey's end.

And so, on the other hand, the sight of a child fresh from its Baptism, to any who has faith to know what Baptism is, what a token is it of Christ's Presence! Of an elder person we cannot, of course, know, how far he may have driven his Saviour from him by sin: but the infant, we are sure, has not done so: we are sure that he is a member of Christ, that his body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, the Temple of God; that Christ is in him, that he is a "partaker of the Divine Nature." If we saw an Angel, it would fill us with awe: we should fear to sin in his presence. Why? Because we should know he came directly from Heaven: and so, had we faith, we should be kept from sin by the sight of a baptized infant: it too comes fresh from heaven, for it comes from the everlasting Arms, from the embrace and blessing of Jesus Christ.

When these two then are joined, a devout old man or woman, waiting on the threshold of Paradise, and a holy child just made a member of Christ, there is, in a manner, a double savour of heaven: the mystery of godliness, the Presence of Christ, is brought exceeding near to us; it is a good time then silently to breathe holy vows against sin, to devote ourselves inwardly to our Lord with all our hearts, to repent

more deeply than ever of whatever makes us unclean and unworthy of such blessed company.

When devout and kindhearted old persons are in this way waiting on children, no doubt some of their thoughts are taken up with praying and wishing and expecting and fancying what blessings those little ones may obtain, and what good, in time to come, Almighty grace may enable them to do. Such thoughts and prayers are a faint shadow of the just and devout Simeon, and the words which he spake by the Holy Ghost, while he held the Divine Infant in his arms. He spake of two things, his own departure, and the great work which the Holy Child was to do: that God had prepared Him to be the Salvation, not of the Jews only, but of all people: "to be a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "the glory of God's people, Israel." He was ready to go, though he foresaw all this, and though he held the Divine Child Who was to accomplish it, in his arms. He was ready to go; for thus departing from Christ, he knew that in some mysterious way he should be brought nearer to Him: as the Apostles rejoiced at our Lord's Ascension, looking forward to that nearer Presence, that actual touch of Him, which they could not otherwise enjoy. O happy those aged men and women, who are ready to go as Simeon was, because they have been just and devout, and have waited for the consolation of God's people: and happy too the little Christian children, whom such aged persons take up in their arms and bless: whom they think of with hope and delight, whom they remember in their prayers: and happy we too, of all sorts, if we permit ourselves to be moved by these and the other many manifestations of

our Lord's presence to sincere penitence and a just and devout life ! Happy for us all, if we be careful so to live, as that we may, every evening, more heartily use the prayer and hymn of this venerable Saint, appointed by the Church for our use : if we may without presumption say every night, before we lie down to rest, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant, though unworthy, depart in peace, according to Thy word : for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

Yes, Christians : we are indeed happy, if we can say this without presumption : but that *if* is a very serious word. For do but fancy a man lying down on his bed, night after night, and saying unto God, "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," after a day spent in mere money-getting and covetousness ; in mere selfish and riotous pleasure, in strife and envying ; in thoughts and ways of uncleanness ! Fancy one, fresh from his strong drink, from his lies and cheating and hypocrisies ; from his oaths and curses and revilings ; from his strife and envying, from his hard and unkind ways ; fancy such an one coming to God and saying, "Now let me depart, now I am ready to die." Yet this is really and truly what many, very many such people do. All do so, as many as say the Lord's Prayer, while they are going on in bad ways. &c.

Now I do not say this to hinder you from saying your prayers : God forbid : but to set you on thinking, what a thing it is to pray without really turning from your sins.

SERMON XVI.

THE OUTCAST'S PLACE FILLED.

S. MATTHIAS' DAY.

Ps. cix. 8.

"Let his days be few, and let another take his office."

THIS Saint's day is different from all the rest in one very striking and awful circumstance: that it commemorates in a manner the fall of Judas, as well as the consecration of holy S. Matthias in his room. The sad event, which made room for this new apostle, is by no means left out of sight, or lightly touched upon, in the Scripture account of his election and Ordination. S. Peter in his speech to the assembled disciples, and they all afterwards in their prayer to our Lord, make particular mention of Judas, and of his end, so unspeakably dreadful.

Therefore, as often as we keep S. Matthias' day, we keep the memorial of the sin and misery of the traitor Judas also: and our thoughts are carried back to that severe and awful Psalm, the 109th, which contains at large the sentence of the Everlasting Judge on such wickedness as his: that kind of

wickedness, which is properly called Apostasy ; when such as have been brought unusually near to God, fall away from Him ; and their fall, by a most just judgement, brings a curse proportionate to their first blessing.

Such was the fall of our first parents in paradise ; of Esau, the first-born of a holy patriarch ; of the Israelites in the wilderness, with the Cloud of Glory in sight ; of Balaam, the prophet, whose eyes were open, and who saw the vision of the Almighty ; of Judas, Christ's Apostle ; of the Jews, His ancient people ; and still more, of Christians, who are now so near Him by special grace. Such also was that event, which was the root and the type of all these, the original fall of the Evil one himself from his place as a bright Archangel in heaven, to be chief of those who are bound in everlasting chains under darkness.

Now two circumstances of the punishment of such as Judas are expressed in the text : a verse, which S. Peter also quoted in speaking to the disciples of his fearful end^a : "Let his days be few, and his office," or bishoprick, "let another take." The words in themselves sound simple enough ; they might seem to speak of no more than all human beings must undergo, by the necessity of their mortal nature. All our days are few : they are but as grass ; they are gone, almost before we can count them. All our places, stations, and offices, whatever they may be, must soon pass away from us, and another take them in our place. But this, the common lot of all, is here turned into a fearful and peculiar curse for

^a Acts i. 20.

those who slight high privileges, and betray sacred trusts: Almighty God thus instructing us, that as He can make blessings out of all to the good, "is able even of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham," so out of all He can provide punishment for the wicked. And this too is seen throughout all His dispensations. The same pillar of the cloud, which was darkness to the Egyptians, gave light by night to the Israelites. The voice of Christ, which was healing to the faithful, caused the unclean spirits to cry out in torments. And for aught we know, the same divine Presence will be heavenly light to one sort of souls; hell-fire to another, to all eternity.

No wonder then, if such ordinary things as the shortness of life, and the dread of parting with our stations here, which are trifles, or even blessings, to the obedient, should be mentioned as real curses to the unfaithful and unruly.

At the same time it is to be observed, that these very circumstances are also means in God's hand, to lessen the quantity of mischief which is done by those who fall from Him. Their "days are few:" let them do their worst, they must come to an end in threescore or fourscore years; and it has been thought that this was a merciful dispensation, ordered by the Almighty about the time of the flood; since, according to the rate at which man's wickedness was then increasing, the very world itself could not have borne it, had men continued to live, as those before the flood, seven, eight, or nine hundred years each. It was merciful to the world, that their days were made in comparison few; and it may have been merciful even to themselves; for they had the less

time to “^b treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.”

Again, their having to part with their office, where-insoever God may have trusted them, to another: this also greatly diminishes the quantity of mischief they can do in it, and the quantity of scandal they bring upon their calling, especially if it be a high and holy one. Besides their having less time to do harm in, people live in hopes, that they shall ere long see a change for the better, and their hope lessens their grief and offence.

The instance of Judas is a very plain one, for shewing forth the dealings of God's providence in this respect. His short life as an Apostle (for it had not been three years complete) would have been a blessing, had he been such as S. James, the first of the twelve who came to his great reward: he would have departed, and been with Christ so much the sooner. But as it was, what judgement could be more fearful? He had purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and within a very few hours after, seeing that our Lord was condemned, he came and cast down what he had gained by it, and departed, and went and hanged himself; and then, even in his hanging, he had to endure some violent fall, so that he “burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.”

Thus his days were signally cut short; and as to another taking his office, S. Peter reminded the disciples, that the Scriptures concerning him were of course to be fulfilled, especially two which he specified: “Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein;” and, “his bishopric let another

^b Rom. ii. 5.

take." No man dwelt in Judas's portion or habitation; for it was used only to bury strangers in, and was called the "field of blood." Another took his Apostle's, or bishop's office, namely, the Apostle of to-day, S. Matthias.

Thus Christ so ordered things, that the very downfall of one of His own Apostles, which beforehand one would expect to be well-nigh the ruin of the Church, was made consistent with its continuance and prosperity.

Had Judas been allowed more time to exercise the powers of an Apostle, who knows what incurable harm he might have done to the infant Church?

Had his place not been filled up, it might appear as though God were forsaking us; as if the whole Church might possibly one day fail, through the unworthiness of its pastors. This the Almighty has, we trust, effectually provided against, by what is called the Apostolic succession, the handing on of His grace from age to age through the Bishops; of His care for which, the ordination of S. Matthias is the first example in the Church. We know by it, that it is not His will to let His Church's being depend on the character of His ministers; since after the very worst, after Judas by transgression had fallen, another was elected to take his part of the ministry and Apostleship. And so, what is truly wonderful to think of, he whom Christ had ordained, fell away and was lost; but he whom the Apostles ordained in the absence of Christ, and before the coming of the Holy Ghost, stood firm, and kept his crown. Our Lord intended, as it may seem, in this as in many other ways to teach us, how entirely He

would have us regard His Church's commission as all one with His own.

Further, the Scriptures appear to signify, that this His dispensation concerning Judas was a kind of type or pattern of His dealings with the whole Jewish people, when they proved unfaithful. For the sixty-ninth psalm, which S. Peter on this occasion interpreted of Judas, "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein," is explained by S. Paul in the epistle to the Romans, as concerning the unbelieving Israelites, and the punishment they would undergo for rejecting Christ^c. Nor is it hard to understand wherein the two are alike, and how the one may stand for the other; the traitor Apostle for the rebellious Jewish nation.

They are alike in this, that they both came so very near Christ, by His special favour; and therefore, when they proved unworthy, their punishments might well prove to be alike. Thus, as Judas's days were few, as he was cut off suddenly in the early time of his Apostleship, so were the days of the Jewish people few, in comparison with what God intended for them, in comparison of His true everlasting Church. They had been God's people for many hundred years; but those years were but a few days in God's sight, whereas He meant them to have been His people for ever.

Then, whereas it is written of Judas, "Let another take his office," we know that the Christian Church, gathered from among both Jews and Gentiles, has been put in the place of Israel, to be God's minister: and by its union with Christ, to be Priest, Prophet,

^c Rom. xi. 9, 10.

and Ruler on earth. And as Judas's name is a name of reproach, as the very place where he died had an evil mark set upon it, so, ever since the children of Israel were cast off for rejecting Christ, their name, according to the threatening of Moses, has become a proverb and a byeword and an astonishment among all people.

Now it is a serious and alarming thought for us all. If Judas Iscariot, who, favoured as he was, had never received the Holy Ghost ; if the Jewish people, whose highest privileges were but a shadow of what we receive in Baptism, if they had their days cut off by so dreadful a sentence, and their place in God's world given over to others : what are Christians, what are Christian pastors to expect, should they prove, after all, unclean and unworthy ? As for the Church of God, we see and know, even by the ordination of S. Matthias, that He will protect her and prolong her days, even through the worst times which evil men may bring upon her : “^dHe hath no need of the sinful man.” Though a whole generation proved Judas's, He could raise up others like Matthias in their stead. But to us severally it is a fearful thought, how near we may go, how near, alas ! we have gone, towards forfeiting our privileges, and bringing the traitor's curse upon us.

Many Christians, too surely, have been miserably trifling with their own blessings, ever since they were able to think at all. They began by trifling with their prayers : they cared not to say them earnestly, though they were told never so often to do so. Satan was watching, ready enough to interrupt those

^d Ecclus. xv. 12.

whom he saw, rather wishing to be interrupted. And so it has come to pass, that although they have gone on saying prayers regularly all their lives, it can scarce be said that they have truly prayed at all. Inattention, thus indulged, is direct trifling with God: it is quite a different thing from the natural weakness and infirmity which causes even good men's thoughts, against their will, to wander in their devotions.

Young people who have got into this habit will, almost of course, behave disrespectfully at Church, another most ordinary way of trifling with holy things. Might we not truly call it another lesson in the devil's school? It is indeed a sight to make that Evil one rejoice, to see how large a proportion of most congregations go on, from week to week. Out of mere lightness and foolishness of heart, they trifle away that great blessing of being, where Christ is. Many, nay all of them, know that they are doing wrong; it is very little pleasure to them; yet they go on, from mere bad habit, months and years, without seriously blaming themselves: every time they go to Church they trifle away some high and heavenly blessing, offered there by our Lord to His true worshippers.

Thus prepared by inattention in private prayer, and irreverence in God's house, they go abroad among the duties of life; and their enemy is still at hand, and knows too well, how to come upon them. He comes to them with bad thoughts; and they, not having their hearts chastened by the continual remembrance of God's presence, open their minds to his impurities, instead of turning away from them at

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once. Bad thoughts bring irregular looks, dangerous liberties, disorderly doings, secret sins: and with these upon his conscience, the unhappy person goes again to the house of God, perhaps to His Altar, with far too little fear and self-reproach. He thinks, perhaps, that he means to amend; but when the temptation comes again, it is but too often found, that he has no real principle to contend against it. Again he falls, and again he comes near to Holy Things; and except God deal with him, and open his heart afresh by some of His marvellous providential mercies, what can be expected of him, but that the Holy Spirit, so continually grieved, should quite withdraw from him, and leave him to go down to his grave without any true penitence; without ever really and sadly considering, how near he has come to the sin of betraying Christ, while his hand was with Him on His Table?

Judas's own sin, we know, had what many would account a very slight and ordinary beginning. He kept the purse, in which our Lord and His Apostles lodged what little money they had, and he was tempted to help himself to a little out of it, when he thought it would not be missed. Are there not very many Christians, who would reckon this a small sin? hundreds of servants, who scruple not to help themselves, when their master is out of sight, although their conscience tells them that, if he were in sight, they would be afraid and ashamed to do so? thousands of poor people, who make free in many ways with the property of their richer neighbours, and would rather not be known to do so? Why would they rather, it were not known? Because their hearts

tell them it is wrong, and they may be called to account for it. Yet the same persons not unfrequently go on, with little fear or remorse, presenting themselves before God in His holy services, as if He had never said, "Thou shalt not steal."

I am not, of course, at once comparing them to Judas; yet surely they are so far like him, in that they fear not to keep company with Christ, while yet they are secretly taking a liberty, which they know in their hearts Christ has positively forbidden.

Let them hasten to leave off their sin, lest their hearts grow incurably hard. Let them consider those fearful words, "After the sop, Satan entered into him." That is, when Judas was not moved by the gracious warning of our Lord, shewing him that He knew what mischief he was secretly thinking of, our Lord no longer hindered the Evil one from getting entire possession of him.

The nearer Christ has called us to Himself, the more dangerous surely are the first beginnings and whispers of sin; and the nearer we have ventured to approach, the greater advantage have we given to Satan, except we tried in earnest to purify our hearts and desires.

No doubt, S. Matthias himself may have had trembling thoughts like these, wherewith to keep himself lowly and humble, when he was called to so great an honour, so high a place in the Church. And perhaps this was one reason, why the Apostles, in their Ordination prayer, not only begged a blessing on Matthias, but also made particular mention of Judas and his fall; and what is more awful yet, of the place to which Judas was gone; for "he fell," say they, "that

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he might go to his own place." What must have been the new Apostle's thoughts, when he was thus put in mind of Judas's place ! How earnestly must he have prayed in his secret heart, that such place, or a worse, might never be his own !

I say, a worse ; for must it not be worse for those who, besides Judas's other privileges, have also that which is above all, union with Christ by His Holy Spirit, and yet fall away as Judas did ? That privilege the holy Matthias received within a few days, when the Holy Ghost came down upon the assembled Apostles, and he never forfeited it ; he went on glorifying God as an Apostle, until he was permitted to glorify Him as a martyr. We in our measure have the same privilege : the Holy Spirit came down upon us at our Baptism. We, too, are members of Christ ; but whether our days in His kingdom shall be few or many ; whether we shall be permitted to keep our place, or be cast out to make room for those that are holier and better, who can tell ? Or how can a sinner ever be thankful enough that it is not yet over with him ; that he has still time, he knows not how much, to humble and punish himself heartily for his great imperfection and unworthiness ; to watch and break himself of all beginnings of sin ; to subdue the flesh to the Spirit in all things ; to acquaint himself with God in all the ways of His Church ; to fear always ; and to be more faithful and true in every part of his calling towards God and man ?

SERMON XVII.

THE FILLING UP OF FORFEITED PLACES, AWFUL
YET COMFORTING.

S. MATTHIAS' DAY.

Ps. cix. 8.

"Let another take his office."

OUR Church Services lead us at this time to think more than usual of the Christian ministry. For yesterday was one of the Ember days in Lent, and to-day is S. Matthias' day. By the Ember days, as you know, are meant certain days which the Church has set apart for us all to fast and pray, to obtain a blessing on those who are to be ordained. It is a great task, a heavy burthen, which they are called to take upon them. In charity we are bound to pray for them, as we would for men entering into a dangerous battle. Many, I hope, have been praying in the course of this week for those who were to be ordained to-day. By this time it is likely they are ordained: several in various parts of the Church, who when they rose up this morning were laymen, are by this time clergymen: they have received authority from Christ, through His servants the

Bishops, to stand as it were between Him and His people: to give His messages, and to convey His Sacraments. By this time that burthen is laid upon them, which can never, never be taken off; for the law of the Church is, Once a priest, and always a priest. Those who were ordained this morning will have to lie down to-night with the burthen of that great trust upon them. If we have not prayed for them before, let us in charity pray for them now.

And to quicken our charity, and make our prayers more earnest, let us think also on the other mark, which the Church has set upon this day. It is the day of the Apostle S. Matthias, and calls upon us to remember how he came to be an Apostle. He was not simply appointed, as the rest of the twelve had been, but was substituted in the room of the traitor Judas. We cannot think of the honour and favour shewn to him, without also thinking of the sad fall of the other. No doubt, those who have been newly ordained this morning must have had many trembling and awful thoughts of this. The remembrance that, even among the Apostles, there was such a person as Judas, must be to the end of the world terrible to all Bishops and priests: especially to those, who, alas, have not only the burthen of their office to oppress them, but a load also of wilful sin and neglected duty on their consciences.

This whole day then, from morning till night, is, to the religious and thoughtful heart, filled with remembrances of two things: God's goodness in giving us pastors, and man's degeneracy, too often making that goodness in a measure void. The Ember days and Ordination Sundays, going on from year to year,

from season to season, are but the continuance of that miraculous mercy which began in the Ordination of S. Matthias. They shew us our Lord's fatherly care, in providing a constant succession of shepherds, by whom He has promised to be with His flock, even to the end of the world. S. Matthias was the first appointed, after He had gone out of sight: and that there might be no doubt of its being our Blessed Lord's own appointment, in answer to the prayer of S. Peter and the rest, within a very few days the Holy Spirit came down upon S. Matthias as well as on the other eleven. This appointment, carried on as it has been by the successive consecration of Bishops in every part of the Christian world all the way from that time to this, is a sure token and pledge from our Lord that His Holy Sacraments will never cease, His priests will never leave off shewing His Death till He come, they will always continue solemnly offering His own memorial Sacrifice, His Body and Blood given in Holy Communion. Whatever else may pass away, the Word of Christ in His two blessed Sacraments, we know, will never pass away. This is our hope and comfort, as in all the trials of the Church, so particularly in that most distressing trial, the unworthiness, the falling away, the ruin of her ministers. They indeed perish, but the Church remains. They fall away, but others are raised up in their place. As it is in the psalm, God has "ordained a lantern for His anointed:" a lamp set in His temple, which shall never go out: His sacramental grace, continued from age to age by one Bishop after another, one torch catching fire from another. Saul is

• Ps cxxxii. 19.

rejected and lost, but David is anointed in his stead. Here is comfort and warning at once. And both are shortly set forth in the short verse, which I read to you as my text. "Let another take his office;" or as S. Peter quoted it when Judas' place was to be filled up, "his bishoprick, his Apostle's place, let another take." Here, I say, in those few little words, is both the goodness of our Lord, and our own danger. Our danger, in that the unworthy priest forfeits his place in his Lord's house and kingdom: Christ's goodness, in that the place is not left empty. Judas must lose it, but another will be raised up in Judas' stead. The bad shepherd will be cut off; but the Lord will not leave us without a shepherd. This is the plain meaning of the prophecy, and of S. Matthias' day. As often as this time of year comes round, we have from God one most fearful token in the recollection of Judas' fall, but we have two most gracious tokens, in the ordination of S. Matthias, and in the continuance of the Ember days, and the constant renewal of regular ordinations among us. As in all His spiritual mercies, great reason have we to rejoice in His goodness, but for our own sins' and infirmities' sake we must rejoice with deep fear and trembling.

But what I want you especially to observe is, that the comfort, and the warning is by no means confined to the priests, and other ministers of Christ's Church, but belongs also to you, my brethren, all of you. Judas is a type and sample, not of wicked pastors only, but of all wicked and corrupt Christians. And our Lord's mercy in raising up Matthias is a type and sample, not only of His providing successors to His Apostles, but also of His raising up in all ages

holy and good men to serve Him worthily in His Church.

To speak first of that mercy of His: we see, my brethren, how constantly it cometh to pass, that when one is taken away, be he man or woman, high or low in station, whom people thought they could not do without, God's merciful providence raises up another, who does the work of the former as well or better than he did it himself. Elijah is taken away, but a double portion of his spirit rests on Elisha. Something like this, in different ways and measures, we may even see at times with our own eyes: and when we do not see it, we need not doubt that God is working it out, unknown to us. He is continuing on the line of the holy people, by quiet, humble persons, unknown to us, who yet will be found in the end to have been real saints: as He continued on the royal line of David through the carpenter's house of Nazareth, by persons whom the world never knew, quite down to the Christ. And in this sense, as well as in the succession of the Apostles and of sacramental grace through them, the prophetic sayings will doubtless come true, "^b David shall never want a man to sit on his throne:" "His seed shall endure for ever:" the true seed of the true David, humble, holy, obedient Christians.

But on the other hand, fearful in proportion will the end be of those, who by their own fault fall away: who stay at the feast without the wedding-garment, and force, as it were, the King to cast them out. All such Christians are more or less like Judas, in venturing so near to Christ with no real purpose to

^b 1 Kings ii. 4. Jer. xxxiii. 17.

obey Christ. For what was it that made Judas more inexcusable than other sinners? Plainly it was his being so near to Christ: so that his falling away was more like an Angel's backsliding than a man's! And therefore our Lord said long before, "° Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of *you* is a devil?" Not meaning of course simply to call him by a hard name: but intending us to learn, and never to forget, what a thing it will be, if we in the end be found without the wedding-garment, we who receive Christ, or are invited to receive Him every time there is a Communion in the Church! What a thing, if any of you who come here, some quarterly, some monthly, some oftener, to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, should be found bye and bye to have been wilfully bringing his sins with him to the foot of the Altar, without any real endeavour to forsake them. Alas, it is no such impossible case: can we say that it is not like Judas' case? And if it be at all like Judas' case, may we not with great reason fear, lest of us also it may be said ere long, "His bishoprick let another take?" Yes indeed, my brethren, before many years are over, perhaps before many days are over, the Great Judge will say, "This man, this wicked Christian, has profaned My Name long enough, with his secret malice, lust or hypocrisy: he is a vile figtree, cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground? take him away, and let another and better have his place in My vineyard." And so the bad Christian will perish, unpitied by God, by Angels and by men, because he is a bad Christian. Had he been only a bad heathen, the misery had been less:

° S. John vi. 70.

as it is said, “^d It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of Judgement, than for you.”

Thus you see in general, how truly, how sadly, the case of Judas answers to the case, not of wicked priests only, but in general of all wicked Christians. And as it was very aweful for S. Matthias to find himself put in Judas’ place, as it would be very aweful for any priest or Bishop to be appointed in the room of one who had fallen scandalously, so surely it is aweful, my brethren, for each one of us, in whatever station, when he sees, hears, or reads of any one becoming a cast-away: when he is put in mind, how God’s people the Jews were rejected, and the Gentile Christians put in their place: how some even of the great and glorious Angels kept not their first estate, but cast themselves down from heaven by grievous sin. Such things speak to us in a voice which we cannot mistake: and what are the words of that voice? “^e Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not” His highly favoured ones; “the Angels that sinned, or the seed of Abraham His friend; why shouldest thou expect Him to spare thee?”

And we most of us know something of the miserable kind of feeling which it is, when people have done wrong, and are justly deprived of some good thing, and see others who have done better, preferred before them. Children at school know, how bitter it is to lose their place for bad behaviour: persons who are out at service can understand, how they would feel, were their master suddenly to say to them, You cannot be here longer: you have forfeited your place, I must put another into it. All this we can all of

^d S. Matt. xi. 24.

^e Rom. xi. 20.

us partly understand. Understand then, and consider in your hearts, that it will be something of the same kind of feeling, only a million times more grievous, when wicked and unfaithful Christians will lose their place in God's family for ever, and see those who have done better, exalted into it. Our Lord Himself has warned us of it. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." And not only Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : persons eminent for holiness and goodness : but even the publicans and the harlots : those who were farthest from God, if they truly repent and turn to Him, and do works meet for repentance, will enter into His kingdom before us ; before us, who have had so many advantages, except we be watchful to keep the good which He has given us.

Well then, let us be watchful. Let us examine ourselves day by day, that we may know, each man the plague of his own heart, the temptation of which he has most reason to be afraid. Let us pray that we may find it, and having found it, let us pray against it. For instance, in this week's collect we beseech God to keep us from evil thoughts, which may assault and hurt the soul. Now, when you hear, or say this prayer, you will of course, if you are at all in earnest, have in your mind the particular bad thoughts which are apt to assault and hurt *you* especially. If you are apt to be grudging and envious, if it hurts your feelings, when you see others richer and more respected than yourself, you will recollect

[†] S. Luke xiii. 28.

this, and will wish and pray to have your soul defended from grudging and envy. If you are tempted rather to loose unclean thoughts, then with all your might you will wish and pray for God's good Spirit to keep your heart pure and clean. Thus wishing and thus praying, no doubt you will have your wish and your prayer. He Who hath given you a place in His kingdom, will enable you to retain that place. Only do you keep hold of His Hand, and be sure He will never let you go.

SERMON XVIII.

REPROOF A SEARCHING TRIAL.

S. MATTHIAS' DAY.

PROV. xxix. 1.

*“He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck,
shall suddenly be destroyed, and that, without
remedy.”*

GOD is Love, and His love, like His mysterious Presence, is around us on every side: it “^asearcheth us out and knoweth us: it waiteth on our down-sitting and our up-rising: it understandeth, and prepareth our way long before: it is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways.” Our whole being is full of His love; and every Sunday, every Saint's day, as it comes round, brings with it some fresh token of His marvellous unspeakable care and mercy: and *this* Sunday, my brethren, and this Saint's day, sets before us in particular His great love in the matter of reproofing and rebuking sinners. I say, that our gracious God and Saviour shews Himself especially loving, when He rebukes us: as it is written both in the Old and New Testaments, “^bwhom the

^a Ps. cxxxix. 1, 2.

^b Prov. iii. 12. Heb. xii. 6.

Lord loveth, He chasteneth:" and in spite of all our self-will, and fretfulness, I believe we have all a kind of feeling of this at the bottom of our frail, wayward hearts. I believe that in the most unruly persons there is something which answers to wise and loving discipline, and welcomes it, and would make them the better for it, if only the persons themselves would encourage the good feeling, and allow it to have its own way, instead of stifling it by pride and false shame and wilful fancies, taught them by the world and the devil. I believe that those who are in trust over others will always find that gentle but firm rebuke, though it may provoke at first, will make them a thousand times more truly beloved in the end, than if they passed things over in silence, as if they cared not at all for them. Common sense tells every man who has any thought at all, that "c the care of discipline is love:" that the reason why good men reprove, is because they love: and so that proverb is continually seen to come true, "d He that rebuketh a man shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue." But if this be so in regard of men's reproofs, how much more in regard of God's, Whose love so marvellously tempereth all His chidings and visitations, that, even in the very act of wounding, we may feel, if we will but believe, that He is indeed making us whole!

But as the reproofs of God are sure tokens of His tender love, so are they in an especial manner means of proving us, and disclosing what is in our hearts; what manner of persons we really are towards Him. God's reproofs and rebukes have this effect, in com-

° Wisd. vi. 17.

d Prov. xxviii. 23.

mon with everything else which causeth us to feel, how near He is to us. He is a consuming fire : and like fire, the outskirts of His Glory, the signs of His near Presence have a trying and searching power, very awful to all that come nigh Him. His reprovings and warnings cannot leave us as we were : if we are not the better for them, we are a great deal the worse. They put us under a very special probation.

The Bible from beginning to end, from the Lord's coming down to walk in the garden and remonstrate with Adam after his fall, even to His coming in the clouds to judge the world ; from beginning to end, I say, the Bible is full of histories which shew, how very awful and critical is the condition of those, whom God in any manner has made aware, that He is really rebuking them for sin. But of all those histories, none may compare with that which this day of S. Matthias brings before us ; the history of Judas Iscariot, our Lord's reproofs and warnings to him, and the way in which he took those reproofs. It is more awful than all the rest put together, for the reason that no man, that we know of, ever met Infinite Love face to face, as this miserable Judas was allowed to do, and knowingly and wilfully rejected His merciful warnings, as Judas did.

You know, my brethren, what Judas' sin was, how like Cain's sin, and David's, and others of the great crimes recorded in Scripture, it took its origin from what we should be apt to call a very slight beginning. He was a thief, and had the bag : i.e. being entrusted with the common purse in which our Lord and His disciples put what little money they had, he was tempted to break his trust, and help himself now

and then to a little at a time, which he thought would not be missed. That All-seeing Eye we know was fixed upon him, as it is on every pilferer: the Master and Owner of that purse saw the wretched unbelieving man, each time, in the act of stealing, and breaking his trust: a strict account was kept of it: it was not passed over, nor forgotten; it was entered in one of those books, which will be opened at the Great Day; just as every instance of the same kind, every act of pilfering and purloining, by whomsoever committed, is even now entered in the same books, and will be read out of them bye and bye. But as now the All-seeing Witness holds His peace, and doth not as yet bear open testimony against those who so break His plain commandment, but allows them to go on for a while, flattering themselves, it may be, that none saw them, and that they shall never be brought to shame for this: so it pleased Him then, as far as we are told, not to interfere with Judas, but to allow him to go on in his sin without interrupting or exposing him. I suppose Judas might flatter himself, as people do in the like cases, that what he took was so very little, it could make no great difference; that his Master could work miracles, and so easily supply them all; that many, no doubt, had done worse, and yet had been forgiven, and it had been well with them at last! I dare say Judas quieted his conscience with these and other like sayings, which so readily come into the minds of those who have begun to listen to the Evil one, and have entered into a course of sin.

This, or something in the way to it, being Judas' sad condition, observe what a startling reproof our

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Lord uttered to him about a twelvemonth before His Passion. After the miracle of the five loaves, and the discourse occasioned thereby concerning the mysterious eating of Christ's Flesh and drinking His Blood, hereafter to take place in Holy Communion, our Lord put all His Apostles on their trial, saying to them, "Will ye also go away?" as some of your unbelieving brethren are doing: and when S. Peter, in his fervent way, made that loving confession of faith for them all, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life: and we believe, and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God," then our Lord very graciously uttered that solemn reproof to Judas, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spake generally, not naming any one; not, that we read of, giving any sign whom He meant. The disciples, a year after, understood, when the thing came to pass, but at the time they did not at all understand. But Judas himself, how was it with him at that moment? We naturally think that such a word must have wakened up his sleeping conscience, and that he must have begun to say to himself, "What if the Master should mean me, and my way of helping myself out of the bag? what if, in His sight, I should even now be in a way to become like a bad angel, because I am so near Him, that stealing or any other wilful sin in me, is not like the same sin in an ordinary Jew or heathen, but rather it is like Satan's sinning in heaven, in the immediate Presence of God?" Had Judas been at all a sincere thoughtful person, he would have taken his Master's warning in some

• S. John vi. 68—70.

such way as this : and it might have been the saving of his soul : but how did he take it ? We are not exactly told : but we may partly conjecture by the way, in which wilful sinners are apt to take Christ's general warnings, when they read them in the Bible, or hear them in a sermon, or in any way are put in mind of them. Suppose e. g. some preacher, such as the Apostles, enabled by the Holy Spirit to discern in some cases the secret hearts of men, should get up into this pulpit and say, "There are so many men now in the Church, all of them of course are chosen, and called to be Christians ; but I know by revelation, that at least one out of twelve are, in the sight of God, as devils, sadly fallen, at this moment, and were they to die, quite sure to be lost for ever." And suppose further that, in the congregation, there were some regular pilferers like Judas, some malicious liars like the Pharisees, some fornicators, or otherwise profane, as Esau : is it not but too likely, that they would most of them depart, little concerned at the warning ; fancying each one, that *he* should live to repent ; that *his* sin was somehow more pardonable than many : that there were hundreds worse than he : and the like : and if Christians now might make themselves easy on hearing such reproofs, why might not Judas in his time ? At least, we know, that in some way or other, he went on contented in his sin for a year after this reproof of our Saviour : and by that time he was so hardened in his sin, that the next reproof we are told of, which was not a general one, but especially addressed to himself, drove him on into worse sin, instead of drawing him back to repentance. That was, when Judas had found

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fault with the waste, as he called it, of the ointment, which the blessed Mary poured on our Saviour's Head: he wanted it sold, and the money put into the bag, that he might help himself out of it: but he pretended that he was complaining out of care for the poor. Our Lord, by His manner of replying to Judas, gave him, I suppose, plainly to understand that He knew what was in his heart: and this provoked him, so that he presently began planning how to betray our Lord to the Pharisees. Satan took advantage of his hard sullen way of receiving our Lord's mild and merciful reproof (most mild and merciful in this respect, that it did not at all expose Judas' sin to others), and put it into his heart from that moment, to revenge himself, and get a rich reward, by shewing Christ's enemies, where they might find Him in the night, and seize Him without interruption from the people. Take notice of this, my brethren. Not even Satan had dared whisper to Judas so horrid a suggestion as that of betraying his Master, until Judas had, in a manner, invited him by his sullen rejection of his Lord's gracious reproof.

A few days afterwards, Judas with the rest of the twelve sat down with our Lord to the Paschal supper, and our Lord putting on the dress of a slave, and washing His disciples' feet, came to Judas also in turn, and washed his feet among the rest: Judas, and our Lord both knowing, what none of the rest knew, that at that very time the diabolical thought, How may I betray Him? was lurking in Judas' mind. And then our Lord gave again one of His hints, to the rest general and obscure, to the miserable Judas but too plain, of a great mischief to be expected from

some of them; “^d Ye are clean,” said He, “but not all: for He knew who should betray Him: therefore said He, ye are not all clean.” He followed up this warning by putting them in mind of a verse of the psalms, which He said was going to be fulfilled in the behaviour of some one of His familiar friends to Him: “^e He that eateth bread with Me, hath lifted up his heel against Me.” What words were these, to have touched the traitor’s heart, had his selfishness left him any heart to be touched! How plain they must have been to him, knowing as he did that his mind had been for some days constantly haunted with the wish and dream to betray Christ, if he could. But he still pretended indifference: he took no notice; and so Jesus spake out plainly, declaring all but the name of His betrayer: “^f Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.” Thus the reproof came nearer home to Judas: there was but one thing more, viz. to point him out individually: and this our Lord proceeded to do, after He had given him the chance to confess and repent, upon what He had said before. Still however sparing Judas, He did not openly denounce him before the rest, but gave him (as the manner was) a sop, (a crust of bread dipped in broth) for a token to S. John only, that Judas was the traitor. And then Judas, in a sort of defying way, which people sometimes adopt when they are quite hardened, and trying to harden themselves more in sin, braving it out, as it were; Judas asked Him, “^g Lord, is it I?” and He replied, “thou hast said.” That arrow, the sharp arrow of Christ’s

^d S. John xiii. 10, 11.^e Ps. xli. 9.^f S. John xiii. 21.^g S. Matt. xxvi. 25.

reproof, came straight to Judas; he had himself challenged it to come, and he could not parry it, nor hide it from himself and the rest, that *he* was the one declared to be a traitor: and shall he not now repent, and throw himself at his Lord's Feet, now, that it is all so entirely laid open? No, he will not repent, come what will; for now Satan had thoroughly entered into him; he takes our Lord at His own severe and sorrowful word: "^h That thou doest, do quickly:" as if He should say, "Ruin thyself, if thou wilt, and lose no time about it:" so he goes out in the dark, and concludes his dark bargain with the priests, and begins at once to assist in the preparations for taking Jesus by subtlety that night.

And even after all *that*, his Master, in His Divine unutterable sweetness, gave Judas one chance more: for when he came close to Him in Gethsemane to betray Him by a kiss, our Lord spake in that gentle way to him: "ⁱ Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" and again, "^k Friend, wherefore art thou come?" What an opportunity was here for the wretched sinner to stop short in his course, now at the very last moment, if he would! But alas! he would not, he was determined to die in his sins, and how he did die in his sins, we know.

Thus it came to pass with Judas, as with the many great impenitent sinners before him, of whom the Bible tells us: being often reprov'd, and hardening his neck, he was suddenly destroyed, and that, without remedy. Now it is much to be observed, that all along at the same time with these reproofs to Judas, our Lord was carrying on what may be called an-

^h S. John xiii. 27. ⁱ S. Luke xxii. 48. ^k S. Matt. xxvi. 50.

other course or dispensation of reproof, to another person, very near to Judas, of the same company, but of a very different mind. From time to time, as we read of our Lord reproofing Judas, we read of His reproofing S. Peter also; sometimes sharply, “¹Get thee behind Me, Satan,” sometimes most sweetly and gently: “O thou of little faith:” and on those two last occasions, the washing of their feet, and the warnings given at the last supper, it is very striking to watch His special care for S. Peter, taking turns, as it were, with His sad grave reproofs to Judas. And O, how blessed a thing to perceive, in that beloved Apostle, the true Christian dutiful way of profiting by the Lord’s reproofs, when, as our Lord turned and looked upon him, all Christ’s former reproofs and warnings, which he for want of humility and watchfulness had made too little of, all came back upon him at once, and he went out and wept bitterly, and was converted, and all his life after stood firm, and strengthened his brethren.

Christ reproofed Judas, and He reproofed Peter: but with what different results! And it is just the same now: for although He is gone out of sight, He hath sent reprovers into the world, even us of the clergy, the under-shepherds of His flock: concerning whom, at that very time of reproofs, His word was “^mVerily, verily I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me.” The reproofs therefore of Christ’s ministers, read or spoken, in church or out of church, are as the reproofs of Christ Himself, and put all Christians on their trial, as His own disciples were tried. And there is just the same difference now, between one of you, my brethren, and

¹ S. Matt. xvi. 23.—xiv. 31. ^m S. John xiii. 20.

another, in your ways of taking reproof from Christ's minister, as between Judas and Peter in their ways of taking it from Christ Himself. Reproof puts you especially on your trial, a trial which is daily, hourly going on: but the day, the hour is near at hand, when it will come suddenly to an end with each one of us: even as all God's ways of trial will come to an end with all this world, in the great day and hour of all. God's reproofs will come to an end with each one at the hour of death, with the whole world in the Day of Judgement. Then shall it appear whether we have received them as Cain did; as that old world, on which the flood came suddenly, after they had scorned the preaching of Noah; as Sodom, which being daily reproofed by the example of Lot, was overthrown by fire and brimstone, as in a moment: as Pharaoh, so often reproofed by Moses, and as often hardening his heart: as Ahab, warned by one prophet after another, and at last perishing suddenly by a chance arrow; as Judas, reproofed daily by the Lord Himself, and daily adding sin to sin; or whether we have rather turned towards the gracious Saviour, Who was chastening us with His loving reproofs, as Moses did, and David, and S. Peter, and all the saints. In a word, the company on the right hand in that day, will be composed of persons who hearkened to Christ's reproofs: that on the left hand of persons who hardened their necks; and as Judas' crown was made over to S. Matthias, so the blessings, which the unbelieving forfeit, will be made over to the penitent and obedient. On which side will you be? God give us all grace to make the right choice: to hear reproof and improve by it: while there is yet time!

SERMON XIX.

THE OFFICE AND AUTHORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

S. MATTHIAS' DAY.

S. JOHN xx. 21.

“As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.”

THERE is an outward difference between S. Matthias, and the other Apostles : viz. that they were ordained by our Lord Himself ; he, by the other eleven, after our Lord had ascended to the Right Hand of the Father. But this made no difference in the honour and power and authority of that blessed Apostle. All Christians living at that time knew and believed that S. Matthias was as truly an Apostle and disciple of our Lord, as S. Peter, S. John, or any of the rest. Because, though our Lord Himself had not laid His Hands on him, our Lord's disciples had done so by our Lord's command : and that, He would have us understand to be the same thing, saying, “He that heareth you, heareth Me ;” and, “As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” It was of great consequence, that there should be no doubt on this point : the whole Church would have been broken up, if

they had not known for certain, who were Apostles, Christians would not have known, whose teaching they were to believe, whose directions to follow. Therefore our Lord was very careful to set His mark on such as He chose, that His people might have no doubt of His choice. First, the lot which the Apostles cast, fell upon Matthias; then, they solemnly admitted him into their company: and lastly, Christ signified openly from heaven His approbation of what they had done, by sending down the Holy Spirit, ten days after, upon S. Matthias, as well as upon all the rest.

Now, just as it was very material then for the Christians at Jerusalem to know, who were true Apostles, so it is very material now, for all of us, in our several places and parishes, to know who is the pastor truly set over us. He is our shepherd, and the sheep ought to know their own shepherd: he is our teacher, and scholars ought to know their own master: he is our father and our head, and children and families would be in a strange condition, if they did not know whom to look up to. Our Lord and our God therefore, in His providential mercy, has caused us to be under Bishops, each one of whom has his authority from Christ through His Apostles, as certainly as ever S. Matthias had. We are under those Bishops, because in every parish we are under a priest, whom some of them have set over us. The parish-priests hold of the Bishops, the Bishops of the Apostles, the Apostles of Christ: and so we come back to the shelter of that gracious promise, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

I want you to know and consider this very ear-

nestly, especially the younger sort among you. I want you to use yourselves, by God's help, to think of Jesus Christ, when you see or think of your pastor: I want you to consider in your hearts, "Here is one who stands in our Lord's stead; in himself he may be more or less worthy; but whatever he is in himself, to us he is in the place of Christ, and when we see him, we ought to remember Christ." For so, if your parents had gone away out of your sight, and had appointed some one to be guardian over you in their absence, your duty would be to remember them in all your dealings with that guardian, to be dutiful to him for their sake, and to be very thankful to them, that they had so provided for you while they were away.

It is all very well for the people of a country to value and respect their pastors, if so be, as kind and good neighbours, ready to help them if they can; and for other reasons of a like sort. But what the ministers of Christ really want from their people, what we want from you, is this: that you should think, not of us, but of Christ speaking in us and by us; that for His sake, you should remember what we say, and practise it when we are out of sight; that you should pray for us, and seek to be prayed for by us; that, when you are in trouble, especially trouble of mind, when you cannot exactly tell right from wrong, when your past sins come thronging over you, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for you to bear, you should use yourselves without fear to come to us and tell us your grief, knowing that we are bound before God to help His people as well as we can, and to keep their secrets.

I cannot tell you, my brethren, how much good it might do you, if you would set yourselves this rule: to consider the clergy, as being in Christ's stead towards you, and as you would have come to Christ, so to come to them. Come to us, not so much regarding what we are in ourselves, as what He is, Whose message we give, and with Whose treasures of grace we are entrusted. Come to us, truly repenting of your sins, fearing and wondering what is to become of your souls, and resolved to take advice, however unpleasant, if it really seem to be what God would have you do. Attend especially to this: that your thinking of us, your talking of us, your coming and asking our advice, will do you little or no good, if you have no heart to follow that advice. Our Lord Himself, we read, could do no miracle, no, not even in His own city, when the people were altogether unbelieving: no more can His ministers, either by prayer or advice, profit those, who still go on refusing to care for their own souls. But if any person, being really afraid of his sins and of what may come of them in eternity, will come and ask of his pastor what he should do, and being told, will walk accordingly, taking care to please God as well as he can by sincere repentance in all things: thrice blessed is that man: he is taking the very way, which the great and good God has ordained for persons in his case; he cannot fail to go away with a blessing.

Try and put it home to your hearts, my brethren, more and more, and a great deal more than ever you have done as yet, what a mercy it was of God, that He caused you to be born and bred, where you might all your lives long have the benefit of that ministry,

to which Christ ordained the Apostles, the Apostles the Bishops, and the Bishops the priests. Look onward a few years; it may be a few months, weeks, or days; look onward to the time of your last sickness and death: think what a comfort it will be then, when the minister of Christ is sent for, to know that his ministrations will not be altogether strange to you: that you have been used in your health to speak and hear his language; you can go along with him, notwithstanding your pain and weakness: you will feel surer and surer, as he goes on, that it is all true, that you can go to no other but to Christ speaking in him, and that if you go to Him in earnest, you will in no wise be cast out. All this consolation on your sick-bed you might ensure to yourselves, if you would presently turn to Christ's ministers in His Name, and with the true and constant purpose of repenting in earnest without delay.

And what is more, infinitely more; you might ensure to yourselves this great and unutterable blessing: that hereafter, when the Good Shepherd will appear, He will set you with the sheep on the right hand, and not with the goats on the left. You will be on the same side with the holy S. Matthias, who never parted company with his Lord, after he had once received Him; and not on the same side with the unhappy cast-away, Judas Iscariot. The Good Shepherd, Who took you up in His arms when you were very little lambs, and hath carried you in His Bosom, and fed you, all your life long unto this day, He will then call you to come still nearer to Him; and whereas, until now, He has kept Himself out of sight, you will then see Him as He is. He will then say openly to

you in the hearing of all the world, what He is now saying continually, if you would but listen to Him, in the silence of your own hearts; "Come unto Me; . . . and I will give you rest." You will then understand, once for all, the deep and true meaning of all this care which He takes of you, in appointing pastors to take charge of your souls. You will understand, what now you are very slow to believe; that no part of the priest's ministry towards you, or of your behaviour towards the priest, could be of small importance. We shall both hear of it again at the last Day, and it will make a difference to us for ever. God grant it may be for good and not for evil!

SERMON XX.

ENTIRE SELF-SURRENDER AND HUMILITY, LESSONS OF THE INCARNATION.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

S. LUKE i. 28.

*“Hail, thou that art highly favoured: the Lord is
with thee: blessed art thou among women.”*

WHETHER this day is much thought of or no, it is surely a very great day with all who believe the Gospel and the Creed: with all who believe in Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, and that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man. For this is the day, which the Church keeps in yearly remembrance of that great thing, the greatest thing which ever happened to the children of men, how He became Incarnate, and took our nature upon Him. For so it was, that on this day, He, the Second Person in the Eternal Trinity, having been God always, made Himself to be Man of that most blessed woman, whom we honour by the name of the Virgin Mary. “^a Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and

^a Ps. xc. 2.

the world were made," He had been "God from everlasting, and world without end." From everlasting He had been with the Father, begotten of Him, yet One with Him; One in Nature, but not the same Person: the same God, yet not Himself the Father; God, Begotten of God the Father, Light, flowing out from the source and fountain of Light. Thus had the Son been, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, from all eternity: but He was never Man until now. There was no beginning of His Divine Nature, but His Human Nature began as on this day, when He took to Himself that soul and body which the Holy Ghost, in some mysterious way, prepared for Him in the Virgin's womb. Then did the Son of God begin to be what He was not before, viz. the Son of Man. Just then He began to be Man, but never, never will He cease to be so. This is our hope and joy and crown of rejoicing, that God Himself hath vouchsafed to be of our bone and of our flesh, and will be so to all eternity. So that, however mean and worthless a frail child of Adam may be in himself, in this he is exalted above the Angels, that he is verily and indeed, and not in a way of speaking only, akin to the Second Person in the most Holy Trinity. The poorest beggar on earth, nay, which is more wonderful, the foulest and most reprobate sinner upon the earth, is cousin, within so many degrees, to Him Who sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father, and Whom all the Angels worship.

God is become Man for ever. One would think there could be no greater wonder, no surer token of exceeding love; but behold a wonder and a love yet more wonderful and loving. He is become Man,

that He may die for us. He could not die, His Spirit could not be parted from His Body, except He had taken to Him a Spirit and a Body both. His wonderful and gracious Incarnation was in order to His yet more wonderful and gracious Passion. God prepared for Him a Body, and in that Body He came among us, that He might do God's Will therein: *that* Will of the Father more especially, which made it requisite that He should die and suffer for us. Thus Lady-Day prepares the way for Good-Friday, and in the collect for this Feast we make mention, as it were, of both together: "Pour Thy grace into our hearts, that, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son by the message of an Angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection;" and it is well, that the day should sometimes come, as it does this year, on what is called Passion Sunday, i.e. on the fifth Sunday in Lent; at which time the Church sets herself to the more especial remembrance of the Sufferings of Jesus Christ. In a very few days, we shall see Him before our eyes in a manner visibly set forth, crucified, as it were, among ourselves. We shall not think of *that* rightly, unless we have used ourselves to think a good deal of that which happened to-day. We shall never thank our Redeemer as we ought, if we bear not in mind how, from the beginning, He counted all the cost of redeeming us; how He had present to His Divine Soul, even all His life long, all the pains, miseries and indignities, which He afterwards permitted actually to come upon Him. Little children, we know, are born into the world in much ignorance. They come crying among us, but it is not, because

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they can weigh and measure beforehand the affliction and anguish they are to endure. But Christ *did* know it all beforehand : knew not only all the throbs which His cruel pains would bring upon Him, all the Agony which would tear Him in pieces in the garden and on the Cross, but He knew likewise how unworthily the greater part of us would receive His unspeakable mercy : how many, notwithstanding it all, would cast themselves away for ever, crucifying Him afresh, and accounting His Blood unholy. For all do so, who, having been partakers of Christ, live and die in grievous unrepented sin.

Wherefore, my brethren, when in the Holy Week and more especially on Good-Friday, we are trying to lift up our minds and our hearts to the Cross, it is well, that we should bear in mind the mystery of this day also, and how at His Incarnation the Most High God devoted Himself beforehand to die on the Cross. And there is another way in which the history of the Incarnation may help us. It sets before us the example of her, of whom He was Incarnate, and so gives us to understand what manner of men we should strive and pray to be, that His Incarnation and Death may bring us the blessing He intended.

The Son of God made Man, and sacrificing Himself for us, is indeed the only hope of each one of the children of Adam : to each one of us, if we cast Him not away, an eternal and infinite blessing : yet it may be truly said, that some are more blessed in Him than others are ; and surely then, *she* is most blessed of all, who from the beginning was made nearest of all to Him : His Mother, of whose sub-

stance He took that pure Body, which on the Cross was to be our Atonement, and in the Holy Communion our life. His Mother, who bore Him in the womb and in her arms, is, by Divine appointment, called, on that very account, by the special title of Blessed, and shall be so to all generations. See then how He gifted her whom He would most highly bless, and judge what virtues we ought to practise; to whom also, by what He took of her, He has made Himself so very near. If His Incarnation and Death are to save us at last, we must not surely be altogether unlike her, to whom in a certain sense that salvation first came.

Observe how S. Paul describes the condition of a Christian person. He says, Christ is spiritually formed in such an one, as He was really and bodily formed in His Mother's womb. And that, when such an one falls away, the minister of Christ has in a manner to travail in birth with him again, until the likeness of Christ, given in Baptism, but marred and damaged by sin, be formed anew in him. And our Lord Himself cheered His faithful disciples by proclaiming, that whosoever would do His Father's Will, was not only His brother or sister, but even His Mother.

What is that likeness of our Lord, which being formed in the heart and conscience, will entitle one who is naturally a sinful creature, to that highest and purest privilege of being Mother of Christ?

First, such likeness of Christ must be the work of the Holy Ghost within, as the true and real Body of Christ was formed by the same Spirit in the Virgin's womb.

Secondly, mark well the condition, upon which the holy maiden received the great promise: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word." She believed God's messenger at once, and meekly gave herself up to God, rejoicing that all should be according to His gracious Will: although, as it may seem, she neither as yet understood the fulness of the blessing, nor could she well help feeling, that severe earthly trials would come with it. So must we, beloved brethren, if all generations are to call us blessed, by virtue of our near union with Jesus Christ. We too must learn the spirit of obedience, we must count ourselves His servants and His handmaidens, we must say with all our hearts, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." As this was the condition of that most holy woman, the chief of saints, becoming the Mother of Christ, so it must be, when any by Baptism receive the Lord for the first time. They must, if they be of age, promise to keep God's Holy Will and commandments. They must give themselves up to be Christ's soldiers and servants, His slaves, His absolute property. And so no less, when that first vow has been (as alas! by too many) unhappily broken, and God's Image is again defaced in the heart, and Christ has again to be formed there by entire repentance and amendment. Then, as at first coming to Christ, the foundation must be laid in a penitent and *obedient* heart. A person may be greatly vexed at his sin, vexed that he should have so forgotten himself, angry with his own foolish heart for so leading him astray, afraid what may come of it, and ready even in some ways to punish himself for it, and yet

it may not be true repentance, because he may be wanting in the desire and purpose of heart, to do henceforth the *whole* will of his Saviour. Thus a man may be displeased with himself for carnal sins, or sins of intemperance, and may really leave them off, but his sins of pride and anger may remain unconfessed and uncorrected. Then Christ, the image of his Saviour within him, will not be formed again, after sin has defaced it. What is wanted is, that such a person should give himself *wholly* back again to his God, even as his parents gave him at his Baptism: as the loving penitent threw herself at Christ's Feet, and in the token of her wish to keep nothing back from Him, washed them with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with that costly ointment.

Great indeed was the difference between that sainted penitent and her who was made, as on this day, the Mother of God: much more between the Blessed Virgin and the ordinary sort of repenting sinners among Christians: yet still, so rich and full is His mercy, we may help ourselves much in our weak endeavours, by considering how it was with her, in that moment of most heavenly exaltation.

One thing we may learn of her is deep reverence, a trembling, awful sense of the Presence and power of God. For we read, that when the Virgin saw the glorious Angel Gabriel, she was troubled at his presence. The Virgin was troubled at the presence of the Angel: we know that Angels are present with us: why are we so careless of their presence? Yet she was pure and holy, beyond what we can imagine or express: and we, alas, how many things are we

continually doing, quite unfit for heavenly spirits to behold! If she was troubled at the greatness and wonderful nature of what he said concerning herself, what thoughts ought not we to have of God's high purposes towards us, when we are told, each one of us, that He hath made us members of His Son, His own children, inheritors of His kingdom! And so much the more, as she in her humility could not well make out, what manner of saying it should be: it seemed so very strange to her that *she* should be highly favoured, that the Lord should be with *her* especially, blessing her above other women; one may almost suppose that she doubted whether it might not be an evil spirit, Satan transforming himself into an Angel of light. But we can have no doubt of the kind: we know for certain from our mother the Church, Whom we are made members of, and what a glorious heritage He has prepared for us. We cannot doubt it: we can only cast ourselves down in awe and dread, to think where God placed us, where we might have been, and where alas! we are now. Think of it again and again: we are members of Christ: He came by His Spirit in Baptism to dwell in our souls and bodies. How can we ever forget it for a single waking moment? Do you suppose that holy Mary ever forgot her Son Jesus, and how near He had brought her to God? How then can we forget our calling, our nearness to Christ, the glory of our promised inheritance?

Observe again, how simple, plain and homely, is the course of the highly favoured Virgin's life, after she had this more than heavenly blessing. The next thing we read of her is, that she goes to wait on her

cousin Elizabeth, now within three months of her delivery. She minds not the long journey over the mountains: she does not say to herself, "I am to be the Mother of God's Son, Elizabeth only of His prophet; she ought rather, if she could, to wait upon me:" but with all humility and charity she hastens to wait on her aged kinswoman in her travail.

And then when the holy Elizabeth, full of the Holy Ghost, congratulates her in the heavenly hymn, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb," Mary's answer is that other hymn, so well known among Christians, in which she seems in a manner to put away all glory from herself, and to return it all to God her Saviour, Who, by His inconceivable mercy and favour towards her, had both fulfilled the prophecies to Abraham and his seed, and had also shewn to Angels and men for ever, that His Will is to regard lowliness, to put down the rich, the mighty and the proud, and to exalt the poor, the meek and the humble. Here then we see another great point, in which the blessed Virgin's example may help us to try our penitence. We may be sure it is insincere and unsatisfactory, so far as it permits us to indulge in any proud or self-pleasing thoughts. Behold, the Mother of Jesus Christ ventures not to take any thing to herself, but ascribes all the glory to God and His free graciousness: and shall we, who but yesterday, perhaps, were in the pit of deadly sin, shall we secretly praise ourselves in our hearts, perhaps even while we are on our knees before Him? O, make haste and put away such thoughts: humble yourselves exceedingly, when you find, as too often many have found, that in your very prayers, your

morning and evening prayers, your thoughts go wandering about what you have done well, and how highly such and such a person may be thinking of you. Be greatly ashamed of this: humble yourselves for it before God and His holy Angels: for what can be more foolish, more affronting to the All-seeing Eye, than a sinner on his knees, professing to be penitent, and asking pardon for many and great sins, yet inwardly praising himself, at least by comparison with others.

Finally, you know that in a very few days we shall keep the solemn time when the Mother was parted from the Son: the blessed Mary had to give up her Son Jesus. The sword passed through her soul, but there was no impatience, not a murmuring thought. Remember this, when next your good Lord shall try you: whether it be in your own body or in the sickness and grief of those dear to you. Remember that Christ spared not His own Body, nor His Mother's grief. Say to yourselves, "If the Mother of our Lord parted so meekly with her heavenly Son, why should I think so much of the trouble, of now and then giving up some earthly good for His sake?"

Thus may the worst of sinners in their penitence follow the example of Christ's Mother in her high exaltation: and secure to themselves, by His mercy, a place under her feet in heaven. May we all be of the number, by His gracious and undeserved favour!

SERMON XXI.

THE MAGNIFICAT, AS AN EASTER HYMN.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

S. LUKE i. 35.

*“ That holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall
be called the Son of God.”*

WHEN Moses, in the Name of God, ordained the Pass-over to be a principal Feast of the Jews, he ordained likewise that the month in which it took place, should be the first month of the year to them. In like manner, according to the old reckoning of our Church, our year, as Christians, used to begin from this day : from the day on which the blessed Virgin received from the Angel the promise that she should be the Mother of Christ, and on which the Holy Ghost, the Power of the Highest, overshadowed her. To-day, I say, our Lady's Day, as it is called, used to be the first day in the year. And well may we now esteem it the first of all Saints' days, partly on her account, to whose memory it ministers, but chiefly because of the infinite unspeakable mercy, which we and all men received from the Lord this day.

For this is the day of our Lord's Incarnation.

“For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man :” and this was the day on which it happened. The time was come for the Lord to save and deliver the fallen family of Adam, as He had promised in paradise. His Word, spoken to the Evil one in the form of a serpent, to rebuke and put him down, just as he was priding himself on having had his own way with mankind ; God’s Word spoken to the devil in paradise was, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Who was the Seed of the woman, but our Lord Jesus Christ, born as He was of a pure Virgin : having no father on earth, but taking to Himself a Body, in the womb of the holy Virgin Mary, of her substance ? How was the serpent’s head bruised, but by the Cross and Passion of our Lord, by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, destroying the power of the devil, and undoing the mischief which he had done ? How was the woman’s Seed bruised in the heel, but by the same Cross and Passion, humbling and afflicting the Great Deliverer for a short time ? Well then is this day the top and crown of all Saints’ days, not only because no other saint could be so near to our Saviour as His own Mother, but also because it was the beginning of the great deliverance. On this day the Lord God, God the Son, became the Seed of the woman, took our nature upon Him, and so was ready to suffer all that, in His Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, He had resolved to suffer, for our perfect pardon and redemption. The blessed Mary conceiving

Christ in the womb was the beginning of that marvellous chain of mercies, which we celebrate on Good Friday and on Easter-Day. The Incarnation of Christ, as made known by the Angel's message, must go before His Cross and Passion, as the Cross and Passion must go before the Resurrection. All the other great days and wonderful works of our Saviour spring out of this, as their root; they suppose it all along, and when we thank God for any of them, we do well to add a thanksgiving for this also: for indeed no good at all could have befallen us, no real good, had not He so come to save us.

The whole Church of God therefore has, from very early times, made a rule of solemnly thanking Him for this mysterious work of mercy, His becoming one of us, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. We thank Him every evening, and that in words, which we know He approves, for they are the words of the blessed Virgin herself. The Magnificat, as we call it, is her song of thanksgiving: the hymn, in which she poured out her full heart, when she was visiting her cousin Elizabeth, and the babe in Elizabeth's womb, S. John the Baptist, had acknowledged the far greater and diviner Babe, in Mary's womb, before either of the two was born. He acknowledged Christ, by leaping up in some mysterious way, in his mother Elizabeth's womb, when Christ drew nigh, concealed as yet, in the womb of Mary. Upon this the faithful Elizabeth first greeted Mary with a hymn: "blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb:" and Mary replied in the hymn, of which we are speaking. And we may take up her words, dear and holy as she was to the Most High, and far

as we, most of us, have wandered from Him, we are yet permitted and encouraged to take up Mary's chant of thanksgiving and say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour: For He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden. For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His Name." They are words which belong to all times, but more especially they seem to suit this happy time of Easter, and we may in some sort imagine, with what joy and comfort the Blessed Virgin herself must have repeated them, when after the sword had pierced through her soul, she began to taste of hope and consolation again: yesterday, for example, or the day before, upon her first hearing on any good authority, that Jesus was risen from the dead^a: still more, upon her first seeing Him. When that was, we know not from Scripture, a kind of veil seems drawn over it: but it is permitted us to conjecture and imagine, how even her own divine hymn, which no doubt she chanted continually, must have come to her almost as something new, something far deeper than ever she had before imagined, when she used it in these Resurrection evenings. More earnestly than ever might she now cry out "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" &c. As much as to say, I am fully bent to praise and honour and exalt my God, more thankfully than ever I did: this restoration of the lost Son is even more than the original gift of Him. "For

^a In 1845 and 1856 the Feast of the Annunciation fell on Easter-Tuesday.

He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden." He hath seen my deep affliction, when I fainted under the Cross, and now He will raise me to a proportional height of glory. "For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Hitherto they have blessed me as the Mother of so good and wise a Son, not knowing Who that Son really is: but now they will bless and honour me, as the Mother of their Lord and their God. "For He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His Name." He is raising me to some great, unspeakable height of glory: He Who is Holy, doth by His mercy to me, declare what honour and reward He hath provided for the true and constant practice of holiness. "And His mercy is on them that fear Him, throughout all generations." As I said before concerning God's first favour: great and distinguishing though it were, it was not offered to me only, it is within reach of all that fear Him, in all generations of the world: so say I now again: this second and higher gift is God's sure pledge, renewed before all men, that it shall be well with the righteous in the end, and ill with the wicked: well with those that fear God, and ill with those that scorn Him.

"He hath shewed strength with His arm, He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." As He is against all wickedness, so especially against pride, the root of all, and that He hath shewn by His wonderful work this day: passing over all the great ones of the earth, and choosing the poorest, and most lowly of maidens to be His Mother, the Mother of God.

Thus doing, "He hath put down the mighty from

their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek." He hath shewn in this greatest of all things, what the law of His kingdom is; what His mind and will, in all the most ordinary matters, such as men, women, and children, are daily and hourly employed in. Now we know that in whatever degree we indulge our self-satisfied thoughts, we take our part against the mercy, which brought God the Son down from heaven into the womb of this lowly Virgin: and in whatever degree we really humble ourselves, we lay faster hold on that mercy. So again, in respect of ease and pleasure, as compared with strictness and self-denial: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away." His good things prepared for us by His Incarnation, most especially the blessed Feast of that Body and Blood, which on this day it pleased Him to prepare for Himself, are rather for the hungry, than for the full of bread: for the poor in spirit, not for those who trust in riches: for Lazarus the patient beggar, not for those that fare sumptuously every day. And to conclude, "He remembering His mercy hath holpen his servant Israel; as He promised to our forefathers, Abraham, and his seed for ever." His coming by Mary is that good thing, which all the world has been longing for, but especially His own people. We have what they longed for: alas! for us, if we throw it away by our sins. Alas! for us, if while every evening we take up, with this blessed Virgin, the praise of meekness and severity of life, we be yet found the next day as proud and cross, as wilful and self-pleasing as before!

SERMON XXII.

HOW TO BE CHILDLIKE, NOT CHILDISH.

S. MARK'S DAY.

EPH. iv. 14.

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

MANY, very many places there are in Holy Scripture, in which little children are held out to us as a pattern. “Of such,” our Lord said, “is the kingdom of heaven :” “whosoever shall humble himself as this little child,” the same is greatest in that kingdom ; and, “except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no case” even enter into it. And He thanked His Father with a rejoicing heart for having hid the truths of His Gospel “from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes.” And the Holy Spirit by the Psalmist holds out to us a newly weaned child in particular, as an example of the sort of self-denial which we must practise, in order to prepare ourselves for heaven. “^a I refrain my soul and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from

^a Ps. cxxxi. 3.

his mother ; yea, my soul is even as that weaned child." And in the prophet Isaiah we seem to be told that a child's temper is the only one to prepare us for Christian doctrine. "^bWhom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts."

On the other hand, S. Paul, in the text and in not a few other passages besides, appears to warn us against being contented with the mind and thoughts of little children. He says, one of the great purposes of our Lord, in sending down the Holy Ghost and establishing the Christian Church and ministry on earth, was that we "might be henceforth no more children." So he had reproved the Corinthians for being still but babes in Christ, so that he was obliged to feed them with milk and not with meat. And to the Hebrews still more gravely: "^cWhen for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat." He then goes on to intimate to them that their abiding contentedly in this state of childish ignorance was a very bad sign, tending towards their being finally cast away.

We perceive at once that the manner in which children and their knowledge is here spoken of, is quite contrary, at first sound, to the tone of the texts which I before mentioned. Yet both sorts are part of the teaching of the same Holy Scriptures, and therefore of course they must agree, though we were not able to see how. But, in truth, it is not so diffi-

^b Isa. xxviii. 9.

^c Heb. v. 12.

cult to see, how S. Paul in the text might say all he has said of the danger of being children in doctrine, and yet quite agree with such as hold the necessity of being children in heart, to prepare for the right doctrine. It is just the difference between being only *childlike*, and being what we properly call *childish*. To be childlike, is to be full of trust and humility, purity and simplicity of heart: to be childish, is to be unsteady and unfixed; soon tired of old things, and caught by such as are new and striking. The one is the strength of the heart, the other the weakness of the head. The one is that high and divine wisdom, which taught the blessed Virgin Mary to submit herself at once and without any drawback or reserve to that which she knew came from God: “^s Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Thy word.” The other is such feebleness as the prophet reproveth in Reuben: “^h unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” The one continues in the things which it hath learned and been assured of, knowing of Whom it hath learned them. The other is carried about with every wind of doctrine, open to the “sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” The one is that admirable and happy thing, which we see in very young children, how they cling to their parents and nurses, are uneasy if they lose sight of them, and quiet when they feel that they are with them again. The other relates rather to the way of elder children, when they begin to have a will of their own, are pleased at being caressed by strangers, and easily caught by anything that promises to be new and amusing.

^s S. Luke i. 38.^h Gen. xlix. 4.

The great point, of course, with fathers and mothers, in training up the little ones committed to their charge, is this; to keep in them as much as possible of the innocency and simplicity and affectionate trust of little children, while at the same time they are put on their guard against trusting and liking every thing that takes their fancy at first sight: to have them, as S. Paul says, "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil:" or as in another of his epistles; that they should not be "children in understanding:" only in malice they should be children, but in understanding, men. In like manner it has ever been the mind of Jesus Christ and His Church, in training up the new-born souls in Christian doctrine, that they should continue pure in their original simplicity and truth, yet have wisdom and strength of spiritual understanding to turn away from the perverse errors and evil fancies, which the craft and subtlety of the devil, or false teachers among men, would tempt them with, and lead them astray. And as parents employ nurses and teachers under them, and commit their children to their care in their own absence, so our Lord ordained a ministry to take care of His little ones, while He should be out of sight: and this ministry, being duly continued down from His Apostles through all ages, is the safeguard of true doctrine, and the appointed way for helping Christians to go on and improve in the knowledge and love of God. "He gave some Apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers: to the perfecting of the saints in the work of the ministry, and to the building up the Body of Christ: till we all come in

the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children." The Apostolic ministry, keeping up the true Creed, is the appointed security for Christ's little ones, that they may continue and grow up to perfect men in Him. Of this providential order S. Mark and his Gospel are a very remarkable instance. S. Mark was not an Apostle, but what may be called an Apostolical man: a companion of S. Barnabas first (whose nephew he was), then of S. Peter and S. Paul. But it pleased our Lord to make him one of the very chiefest witnesses of the great truth on which all depends, Jesus Christ come in the Flesh. It was His Will, that S. Mark should be the author of that Gospel, which most particularly sets Christ before us as truly Incarnate, Very Man, as we are; going about among us to do good, partaking all our innocent infirmities, entering into our griefs and cares, and healing them all by virtue which went out of Him. What I mean is, that if we compare S. Mark's Gospel with the rest, we shall find that it presents on the whole the completest picture of our Blessed Lord's *doings*, as He went on from day to day, beginning from His Baptism, to His Resurrection. It seems to keep most exactly to the order of time, and to mention most of the minute circumstances of what He did, how He looked, how others, with whom He was, behaved themselves. It is less abundant in discourses and conversations, and more so in exact relation of miracles, and other actions of our Lord. And thus it comes to pass, that while the other Gospels seem, each of them, to have

their particular object : S. Matthew, to prepare the way for our Lord's kingdom, and explain the nature of it, to the Jews more especially : S. Luke, to set Him before us as a Priest, and to invite the Gentiles to Him : S. John, to set forth His Eternal Godhead, and put unbelievers of all times to shame, and encourage His worshippers by recording especially those words and deeds of His, by which from time to time He silenced His enemies in His own holy city Jerusalem : S. Mark, on the other hand, seeming to write merely for the sake of shewing us our Lord as He was, by His deeds rather than His words, leads on his reader to the most distinct and hearty acceptance of Jesus Christ come in the Flesh, as our only helper and healer. We feel more and more as we read, or hear, without being told, what S. Peter, S. Mark's own teacher, expresses in those memorable words, "ⁱ Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name," no other power or virtue, "under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," or healed. And thus all the four Gospels, like the four living creatures or Cherubim which S. John saw round about God's Throne, are four manifestations of Jesus Christ, each in their way helping His Church to know and love and trust Him more entirely, and to glorify and worship "Him that liveth for ever and ever."

Surely, as the year takes us on from one Holy Day to another ; as we turn over the pages of Holy Scripture from one Gospel to another : as we pass on from one portion of our trial here on earth to another, and feel ourselves, as we must if we are not past feeling,

ⁱ Acts iv. 12.

continually brought nearer to Christ, and Christ to us ; we must also feel continually more humbled for our great unworthiness, who have had this divine picture before us all our lives long, and have (so many of us) hardly just begun to copy it : and what if we have turned wilfully from it, and copied rather the very contrary likeness, serving our own lusts and unworthy desires ? It is a miserable thought ; but let us not turn away from it : let us rather dwell on it, and humble and correct ourselves in earnest, during the short time that remains : for that is our only chance of not losing His grace and Image for ever.

SERMON XXIII.

THE PATTERN OF A HOLY CHRISTIAN HOME.

S. MARK'S DAY.

Acts xii. 12.

“When he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark: where many were gathered together praying.”

THERE seems good reason to believe, that S. Mark the Evangelist, whose memory we celebrate to-day, was the person whose name is mentioned in this verse: the same with “John whose surname was Mark,” whose mother Mary was then living in Jerusalem. It is well known that S. Mark was a disciple and friend of S. Peter; some say, he was baptized by him: S. Peter speaks in one of his Epistles of one whom he calls “Marcus, my son;” and the old writers tell us that S. Mark’s Gospel is in substance the Gospel of S. Peter, having been written at Rome under his immediate direction, and examined by him afterwards; and we know that it goes very minutely into particulars of several doings of our Blessed Lord, at which S. Peter with only two others was present,

and altogether has many things in it, which suit well with the notion, that the great and highly-favoured Apostle had some particular hand in it.

All this seems to make it probable, that S. Mark the author of the Gospel, was the person whose mother lived at Jerusalem, and to whose house S. Peter went. And at that time, probably, he was with her : so that the event of that night, S. Peter's marvellous deliverance, might have a great deal to do with S. Mark's becoming an evangelist. That he was probably there, we know from the conclusion of the chapter, where we are told, that Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark^a. He was sister's son to Barnabas, a young man probably at that time ; and his kinsman S. Barnabas took him with himself and S. Paul to be their deacon, or assistant in their many and painful duties. He was honoured by permission to go with them as their minister, when they set out, as you read in the thirteenth chapter of Acts, on their great journey for the conversion of the Gentiles. Thus it appears, that S. Mark was the nephew of holy S. Barnabas, and that they were both in Jerusalem at that particular time, at which God's providence had prepared a great blessing for S. Mark's home. He in all likelihood was there, when the great Apostle, newly delivered out of prison, came there first of all, to make known his deliverance to the assembled Church.

He was there, and most probably his uncle S. Barnabas, and S. Paul too, were there. Think what an assembly of saints, praying for another saint, and

^a Acts xii. 25, xiii. 5.

having their prayer heard. For although S. Mark is not said expressly to have been then with his mother Mary, yet we need not doubt that he was one of the holy company, and at any rate, the manner in which that mother and her household were employed, when S. Peter came among them, shews plainly how he had been brought up; with what feelings he had been taught to look on the many and wonderful turns of God's providence, and His way of dealing with His Church. It was night-time, and they were gathered together, praying: praying at midnight; no doubt, for S. Peter himself, whom they supposed to be still kept in prison, and in great danger of his life. Here the holy Scripture seems to shew us a pattern of a religious and devout family, and of the blessing, which such may hope for at the hands of Almighty God. This Mary, the mother of S. Mark, was most likely a widow, since it is called her house. She was S. Barnabas' sister^b: for S. Paul in one of his epistles speaks of S. Mark, as sister's son to Barnabas. She was therefore a Levite herself, for such S. Barnabas undoubtedly was; "a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus^c:" so we are informed, where the account is given of his selling his land, and bringing the money, and laying it at the Apostle's feet. As S. Mark's mother was a Levite, so most likely was his father also; according to the rule that the priests should marry among their own people: as Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, was of the daughters of Aaron^d, as well as her husband. It was a family therefore, devoted to God's service, every one of them, from the beginning. And we may well believe

^b Col. iv. 10.^c Acts iv. 36.^d S. Luke i. 5.

that an example like that of S. Barnabas, coming so near home, must have had a great effect on them. Indeed, according to the world's way of judging, it was no small sacrifice and self-denial on their part, that they continued to trust S. Barnabas and to be guided by him, after he had sold all his paternal estate, and offered the money for it to the Church. In many families, it would be reckoned hard, that a mother's brother should so give away all he had out of the family ; it would be thought unfair, and unkind to near relations. Not so this holy family, and truly worthy of the priest's office : if we may judge by their parting with S. Mark to go with S. Barnabas, his uncle, to Antioch, and by the love which we see continued so strong between them ; that some while afterwards Barnabas was content to part company with S. Paul, and that, it seems, in anger, rather than not have Mark his nephew for his deacon and companion in his journey^e.

We may then conclude that disregard of worldly wealth in comparison of the service of God and doing good, was one part of the character of the family, in which S. Mark had been brought up : and another point was, that they were among the foremost in confessing and serving Christ in that dangerous time, when it was as much as a man's life was worth for him to be known as a zealous Christian. That they were very forward, so as to be chiefly trusted by the Apostles, we know by this : that S. Peter, on his miraculous deliverance from prison, being left by the Angel to consider what he should do, turned towards the house of this Mary, the mother of John

^e Acts xv. 37, 39.

whose surname was Mark, rather than any other way. Perhaps it would not be wrong to say, that their house was the chief place of meeting for the Church at Jerusalem, at that early time when as yet all Christian assemblies were held in private houses. But however, S. Peter's going there shews that it was in a special sense a Christian house and family, at a time when to be a Christian was dangerous even to men's lives : and as such, it was a house and family which all generations may well call blessed.

But the Scripture further tells us, how they were employed in this holy household, when the great Apostle came to it. "There were many gathered together, praying." It was a time of sore trial and jeopardy : what people sometimes call a great crisis in the Church. A new persecution had just arisen, not from the rude multitude, but from the crafty tyrant Herod. S. James the elder, the brother of John, the son of thunder, one of the most favoured and chosen companions of our Lord, had been slain with the sword^e, and thus the first-fruits of the glorious harvest of Apostles had been gathered into the happy garner of their Lord. This was fearful and trying enough : but more than this was greatly to be feared. "Because" Herod "saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also." Judging as men judge there seemed no chance for his life, who was the very rock, on whom our Lord had promised to build His Church. It was known that he was to die a violent death : our Lord had promised it a little before He departed out of His disciples' sight : He had told S. Peter in return for his great love, by what

^e Acts xii. 2, 3.

death it was His will he should glorify God: and now that he seemed to have had the other gracious promise fulfilled in himself, and that the foundation of the Church among both Jews and Gentiles seemed to have been cast in him, thoughtful Christians might well fear that his time also was come, and that they were about to lose him as well as his companion and comrade S. James, out of their sight: and how far such a terrible destruction of the chief shepherds might go towards scattering the whole flock, none of them, of course, could at all judge. No wonder, at such a time, that they were gathered together, praying; crying mightily to the Almighty Saviour, that He would interfere to save His Church from this new calamity. Ever since the beginning of S. Peter's imprisonment, prayer had been made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. No doubt this prayer of the widow, her family, and the Christians who were gathered together at her house, was the continuation of that devout service, so acceptable to God in time of need. They were praying together, for they knew of our Lord's promise to be, where two or three are gathered together in His Name: they knew that God loves to be importuned by many of His servants at once for the same blessing. They were assembled, not of their own fancy, but in strict obedience to Church authority. S. James the Less, whom the Apostles at this time had made Bishop of Jerusalem, must have known, and approved of their assembly; for one of S. Peter's first directions when he had told them of his providential escape, was, "Go shew these things unto James, and the brethren." Their prayers there-

fore were quite orderly, and they were continued night and day: according to the saying of the Apostle, “^fPray without ceasing.” Think, what an answer it was to their prayers, what a token from the highest heavens, when in the midst of their eager petitions for the deliverance of S. Peter, he himself knocked at the door. It was so great and sudden a return to their devotions, that they could not at first themselves believe it. When the damsel who came to hearken, named Rhoda, took back word to the assembled Christians, that Peter stood before the gate, they could not understand it, but said to her at first, “Thou art mad.” Who knows what great and most desirable blessings the great God of Israel may be preparing for His Church, even in these latter times, if Christians will but be united and persevering in intercession for it? Such, at any rate, was the character of S. Mark’s mother, and of the Church in her house. It was among people so anxious for the Church, so persevering, unanimous, orderly, and self-denying, in prayer (for even the night and darkness could not stop them); it was among such as these that John surnamed Mark was bred up: and although we are not told that he was at that moment present to join in their intercessions, who can doubt that they prayed for him also, and that he was the better for their prayers? Surely, my brethren, this short history suggests to us both the duty of Christians praying together in the Name of Jesus Christ, and also some of the chief rules, whereby we may ensure God’s blessing on such our prayers: and perhaps also we may see here held out to those who love their kins-

^f 1 Thess. v. 17.

men and friends, some very particular encouragements to the right performance of that duty.

That it is the duty of us all to pray together, who can question, seeing that in such times as those, when Christian assemblies were so dangerous, they never left off assembling themselves together? By what rules such assemblies may be best ordered, we may gather also not doubtfully from the same sacred history. It must be, as our Church assemblies are, with sanction from the Bishop : it must be persevering and unwearied, hoping even against hope : it is good, that it be often accompanied with watching and self-denial : for we see that the prayer which obtained S. Peter's deliverance was continued through the night, and that they went on with it, not despairing, almost to the very hour when Herod had appointed to bring him forth to destroy him. It may further be observed, that the younger part of Christian families may well be admitted to bear a part in such holy intercession. The damsel, named Rhoda, was one of the congregation at the house of S. Mark's mother, and she was honoured with being the first person who knew of S. Peter's deliverance, being, as she was, so used to the Apostle's instructions, that she knew him by his voice before the door was opened ; and so pleased to know of his safety, that she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran back to tell her friends the good news. This may help us to understand what sort of a home S. Mark was bred up in : how familiar he would be from his childhood with the ministers of divine service, how rejoiced to see them, how worthy to be admitted to a part in the Church's solemn intercessions. From all these

particulars it seems to me, that those who would make their families Christian, after the pattern of the first Christians, may learn many things which may help them, by God's blessing, in their good and holy but hazardous work.

And surely the privileges held out in the same history to such conscientious family-religion are great and blessed, and enough to make any heart, that has the love of God, burn within itself. Even in the very act of their solemn worship the Christians of Jerusalem are met by the great deliverance, for which they were praying. S. Peter knocking at their door interrupts the very intercession they were offering up for him ! as if on purpose to fulfil the evangelical prophecy, "Before they call, I will answer : and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Thus the united, punctual, unwearied, self-denying prayers of Christians may win blessings, no one can say how great, for the whole Church and for our own dear friends.

Again, we cannot imagine that that holy family interceded for S. Peter only. Doubtless they remembered that one also, who was soon to be absent from among themselves ; absent on the Lord's errand : S. Mark, then a young man, who had been chosen to attend on the other two great Apostles at Antioch. Doubtless they had a prayer in store for him in particular, that his good beginnings might be perfected : and who knows, how far such their prayer may have gone towards obtaining from Almighty God the great grace which that young man afterwards received ? Who knows, how the like charitable

‘ Isa. lxv. 24.

intercession may help any young person setting out on his Christian course? how it may prevail with God to prosper him whenever he is going on well, and to grant him the grace of speedy recovery, should he at any time begin to stumble and fall. S. Mark, it should seem, did once waver; he separated himself, when he ought not, from S. Paul and S. Barnabas, and returned to Jerusalem. Perhaps it was family affection that led him astray: perhaps his love for his home and those dear to him was for the time too strong for his faith. But it was only for a time. We know that he afterwards so recovered himself, as to win the favour of both the holy Apostles, and that he was honoured by our Lord Jesus Christ with the office of Archbishop and Evangelist in His Church, and with leave to lay down his life for His sake. He was Archbishop of Alexandria, the place of all others, where Christian education seems most to have flourished in the early times; and perhaps the good, which was sown in him in his mother's house by the devout example and intercession of the many who were gathered together praying, may have borne fruit ever since, in the schools of divine knowledge which God's good providence has provided for His holy Church. His Gospel, we are sure, bears fruit; and for it and for his saintly example, we are bound to bless and praise our Redeemer, and to teach and accustom our families to do the same.

SERMON XXIV.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS,

S. PHILIP AND S. JAMES' DAY.

S. JAMES i. 18.

"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures,"

OVER and above all the other glorious privileges and tokens, by which our Lord has from the beginning blessed and glorified His Spouse and Body, the Church; that it is One, as being the mystical Body of the One Lord Jesus Christ; Catholic, as belonging alike to all nations; Apostolic, as built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets; Holy, as made up of persons entirely dedicated to Him, and meant to be altogether like Him: I say, over and above all these, the Apostles' Creed sets before us two especial privileges and gifts to be found in the Church and nowhere else: the one the Communion of saints, the other the Forgiveness of sins. On the one hand we are brought into nearest communion and intercourse with those who have pleased God from the beginning of the world; the salt of the earth, the best and holiest of mankind, whether

living or in paradise. On the other hand, there is in the Church, by His exceeding unspeakable mercy, forgiveness and remission of all sins, even the worst: not only forgiveness in Baptism, for whatever has gone before, for all offences committed in men's heathen and unregenerate state: but forgiveness also, entire absolution, for all sins committed after Baptism, but truly and entirely repented of. The holy Church is the mother of us all, but her motherly love is especially shewn towards two classes of her children, saints and penitents; the perfect, to help them on towards higher perfection: and the backsliders, to recover them and to welcome them when recovered. Our privilege, my brethren, is exceeding great, whether, having by God's mercy an earnest desire to be perfect, we are encouraged by the assurance that we are in communion with the holy souls of all ages and nations; or whether (as is, alas! far more likely) we have grievously sinned since our Baptism, and can but hope to save our souls so as by fire. The full type and pattern of this our highly favoured calling may be seen in those places, where the holy Gospel sets before us our Lord making Himself a companion of publicans and sinners. "Many publicans and sinners drew near, and sat down with Jesus and His disciples." Then might be seen in one room, at one table, the Holy Saviour of the world, and His saints with Him, and also many who had been living the worst and most discreditable lives: even as in the holy Church and kingdom of the same Saviour, ever since, there has been both the Communion of saints and the Forgive-

^a S. Matt. ix. 10.

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ness of sins: no perfection too high to be hoped for, no sin too bad to be forgiven, if only men would turn to Christ, and dutifully abide with Him.

At present, the plan by which our catechisings have been ordered, would lead us to speak only of the first of these two privileges, the Communion of saints: and this, you will perceive, suits well with the day; for it is a day consecrated to two of the chief of Christ's saints, and the lessons appointed for it, tell us not a little of our Lord's dealings with His saints; what sort of persons they are, whom He commonly chooses out to bring near unto Himself; and in what sort of ways He trains them. He chooses out the simple, teachable and guileless, and He trains them in temptations, bids them trust Him, and teaches them how to pray. And into communion with such as these He invites us all, even the mere beginners and children, promising continually, You "b shall see greater things than these."

It may be well, however, to observe, that the word saints in Scripture does not commonly mean these higher and more perfect Christians: rather it is applied to all Christians whatsoever. The word saints, like the word holy, has two significations, somewhat differing from each other. Sometimes it means all who are holy, in the sense of belonging to God as His peculiar people: sometimes those only who are changed by the Holy Spirit in a remarkable degree, above ordinary Christians. Now in the Acts and in the letters of the Apostles, *all Christians* are called saints. S. Paul directs his letters to the saints in Achaia, the saints of Ephesus, the saints in Colosse:

^b S. John i. 50.

^c 2 Cor. i. 1. Eph. i. 1. Col. i. 2.

S. Peter, having raised Dorcas from the dead, calls “^dthe *saints* and widows,” and presents her alive. All Christians are called saints, because, whether they be holy or not in their ways, by their calling they are very holy. Thus they are described by S. James, “Of His own will, begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” First-fruits, i.e. the prime, the very best; as our Lord is entitled, “The Beginning of the creation of God.” This is the honour, this the mercy, intended by our gracious God for all whom He hath called to be Christians. Not for any desert of theirs, but of His own will, His free love, He would make them saints, the first-fruits, the best of His creatures; and *that* by giving them a new and heavenly nature, “begetting them with the Word of His Truth,” i. e. making them partakers, in Baptism, of His Son Jesus Christ, the true and eternal Word. This is S. James’ account of all Christians, but it is fulfilled in those only whom the Church acknowledges as saints in an especial sense, because they have gone on into perfection: saints, such as those who are mentioned in the book of Revelations: worthy to be named along with Apostles and prophets, as being especially like Christ, and especially near to Him. In this meaning we commonly use the word in our times: as when, being so directed by the Church, we put the term Saint before any person’s name, as S. Paul, S. John, S. Peter, S. Clement, S. Mary Magdalen: or as when we speak of any dead person, whom we suppose to have been particularly good, as of a departed saint. And so the word is to be taken in the Creed.

^d Acts ix. 41.

In very ancient times, the Communion of Saints, in which all Christians believe, was understood to mean communion with those holy ones especially, who have died in the Faith; which we have pledged ourselves to. Not with all Christians, but with good and faithful Christians; nor yet with all good and faithful, but with those of the higher order, who have attained more glorious crowns by their goodness and faithfulness: the best of the good ground, which hath borne fruit a hundred-fold: nor yet equally with all of these, but with those most, whose crown is now sure for ever, because they are no longer on earth, but safe with Him in paradise. These are they, of whom an ancient Bishop and martyr teaches us to speak and to think on this wise. "Behold the footmarks left in our sight by the several saints returning into their country, that we, keeping close in their track, might follow them into their joy. Wherefore hasten we not onwards, why do we not quicken our pace, that we may have our true home in sight? There is awaiting us a numerous host of beloved ones; parents, brethren, children very many; a great assembly are longing for us: secure now of their own safety, yet anxious for our salvation. To come to their embrace, to draw near and to be seen of them; how great is the common joy both to them and to us! There is the glorious choir of the Apostles, there the renowned band of rejoicing prophets. There the martyrs, an unnumbered multitude, are wearing the crowns of their victorious conflict. There rejoiceth that brightest assembly of virgins; there is due praise given to the fortitude of those who have confessed Christ^e." Lift

^e S. Cyprian de mortalit. end p. 230 Oxf. Tr.

up your hearts, my brethren, think of all these; think not of them as strangers and afar off: for as it is said of their King and their God, so in a manner it may be said of them—they are not far from every one of us. As surely as we, being Christians, members of the One Body of Christ, have communion with all *Christians* on earth, so surely have we communion also with all the blessed saints departed. Whether they are in paradise or in heaven, they remember and pray for us. An Apostle once, S. John in the sixth chapter of Revelations, saw under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony of His Truth, and heard them praying that God would avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth¹. By which we are to understand that the prayers of all saints are being continually offered up for their brethren who are yet here, bearing the burden and heat of the day. They remember us, they pray for us; can it be right for us to forget them? Why even the heathen knew better than that: who in many ways have ever been anxious to do what honour they can to their departed friends. If we turn away from the memory of the dead, we are so far worse than the unbelievers. God keep us from such unnatural, such selfish carelessness! They remember and pray for us: what can we do less than love, long for, and imitate them? As the holy days of the saints come on, one after another, let us endeavour to have a real strong conviction, that they are no strangers, that we are in true fellowship with them. They are in fact nearer to us than any of our friends living here on earth

¹ Rev. vi. 9, 10.

out of our sight. For "in the midst of life we are in death;" it is close to us, there is but a hair's breadth betwixt us, and it: and if we die in God's faith and fear, then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we are with the saints, with the holy men who were taken to their rest so many years ago, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom our Lord honoured by promising that all true believers should sit down with them in His kingdom^e. Think of the patient beggar Lazarus, in our Saviour's parable: one moment at the gate of the rich man, full of sores^h: longing for the crumbs, but with no one to look after him (so it seems) but the dogs: the next moment borne on the wings of Angels, more gloriously than all the most glorious on earth, and resting in Abraham's bosom with that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Do not these two conditions seem very far apart one from the other? Yet Lazarus by the grace of God found them to be quite close together. And so, my brethren, it will be with each one of us, if we will but diligently try to walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham and Lazarus: we shall find by God's mercy, when our hour of departure comes, that the spirits and souls of the righteous are very near us. We call upon them often in one of our Church hymns, "O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever." What a thing will it be, my brethren, what a joy and what a wonder, when we shall come not only to believe and hope, but to feel and know that they have been all along joining with us! I say to you then, my bre-

^e S. Matt. viii. 11.

^h S. Luke xvi. 20 - 22.

thren, *practise* this faith: try to think of the holy ones departed, as of fellow-travellers got on a little before to the end of a journey which they and you were making in common; a few steps more, and you will be with them, you will see them: they are even now standing on the shore of eternity to welcome you, as the Blessed Jesus on the shore of the lake of Gennesaretⁱ, when the disciples were drawing near to land after their hard night's toil in fishing. Learn to regard them as really near you; really, and that soon, to be in your sight: and above all things learn to love them; learn truly to love those saints whom you have never yet seen. Indeed, if you will but read and hear and seriously attend, you can hardly choose but love them, so noble and amiable are the things which Holy Scripture tells concerning them. Only be on your guard against this snare, for it is but too common and dangerous; beware of imagining, "These were saints, great heroes in virtue and piety, pureness and charity, and I am but an ordinary person; well may I admire them, but it is no use pretending to copy them." Such thoughts are too natural, but they come of the Evil one; put them down altogether, I beseech you: believe that our Saviour was in earnest when He said, "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect^k." And surely if the Lord's own example is not too high for us to copy, much less is that of His saints. Those great and good and holy ones began as we did, with a fallen and corrupt nature; some of them, like too many of us, were great sinners at some time of their life: they had no other hope of salva-

ⁱ S. John xxi. 4.^k S. Matt. v. 48.

tion, no other way of salvation than we: as one of the chief of them said, speaking of those who by nature were furthest from God, "we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they¹." Wherefore if we would be saved as the saints are, we must walk in the way of the saints; we must labour to have their mind, and to copy their doings. We must believe that there is such a thing as Christian perfection. Our Lord Himself has told us so, instructing us how a man might be perfect, and lay up a rich treasure in heaven^m: and again telling us of the best of the good ground, which brought forth fruit, not thirty nor sixty but even a hundred foldⁿ; and how one of those who were entrusted with their Master's goods made one pound into ten pounds, another into five only^o. We must believe this, and we must practise it according to our measure: we must try to do all our duties as well and as perfectly as we can. Else how can we say that we love God with all our strength? How are we not breaking the first and great commandment? A loving mother is not contented to do just a little for her child, she longs to perform all her duties to it as well as ever any mother did. Surely, if we have no such zeal as this towards God, if we are satisfied to be just no worse than the ordinary sort, just good enough, as we think, not to go to hell, we shew but too plainly, that our love for Christ is not in reality love; surely we are in danger of the sentence which was pronounced on the unprofitable servant. Our Almighty Friend and Father

¹ Acts xv. 11.^m S. Matt. xix. 21.ⁿ Ib. xiii. 8.^o S. Luke xix. 16 – 18.

was not sparing of His mercy to us. He gave us His own, His only Son: He sent down His Spirit to change our hearts; He hath bestowed upon us, freely and richly, all that could work together for our good both in this world and in the world to come. Alas, that we should be so dead and cold, in the midst of this Divine fire! What if it should prove bye and bye, that in our unwillingness to do more than is absolutely necessary, we have fallen away from God's portion altogether—let our lamps go entirely out! For Christ's sake, and for our own soul's sake, let us pray to have better minds.

SERMON XXV.

APOSTOLIC GENEROSITY IN ENCOURAGING GOODNESS.

THE FEAST OF S. BARNABAS.

Acts xi. 22, 23.

“ They sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch : who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”

THE character, in which S. Barnabas is here presented to us, is that of a person greatly rejoicing in other men's goodness. He was glad, when he saw the grace of God in his brethren. Of his doing so, there are several other instances ; indeed, almost the whole of his conduct towards S. Paul is full, from the beginning, of such generous and affectionate joy.

He, you may observe, was the first person at Jerusalem, who was able to convince himself of S. Paul's being truly converted. When that great Apostle came to Jerusalem, where he was known before only as a persecutor of the Name of Christ, “ he assayed

to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way."

Almost ever afterwards, he continued the affectionate companion and friend of S. Paul. Presently after the visit to Antioch, in the text, we find him departing to Tarsus to seek Saul, and when he had found him, bringing him to Antioch. No doubt he was well aware that S. Paul was, humanly speaking, a much greater and more noticeable person than himself; that by seeking him, and bringing him forward, he was as it were throwing himself into the background: according to what is said afterwards, that wherever they went, Paul was "the chief speaker." But this made no difference to his affection for S. Paul, or his wish to have him with him. He rejoiced to see the grace of God, even when its light shone so brightly in others, as quite to eclipse and drown his own light.

All this is the more to be observed, because this feeling, in the Apostle of Consolation, is especially attributed by the Holy Scripture to the sanctifying Spirit of God. "He was glad when he saw the grace of God, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." So that the "charity" which "envieth not" the spiritual attainments of others, is an especial token "of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

And it is worth observing, that, by God's providence and the Church's order, this festival of S. Bar-

nabas, in every year, comes actually first of the Saints' days after Whit-Sunday ; or, however, nearest to that blessed day. As though this charitable, unenvious mind, of which S. Barnabas was a pattern, were a grace which the Holy Comforter especially delighted to honour, and by which he would have those especially try themselves, who wish to know if they are themselves walking by the Spirit, and not deceiving their own hearts.

But concerning this disposition to rejoice in other men's goodness, it is much easier to see how amiable it looks in others, than to practise it one's self in good earnest. Do not men envy others, not merely for their outward advantages, but for their goodness itself : especially for those parts of goodness, which they themselves have not the heart to imitate ? It is an ancient story, told of a virtuous heathen, that when a loud outcry was once raised against him, and he was to be banished from his country, a person, of whom he asked a reason why he gave his vote against him, replied, " I have no objection to you, but I am quite tired of hearing every one call you 'the just.' " Something of the kind, I fear, takes place not seldom, even within the very kingdom of charity, the Church of our Lord and of His Spirit. Men, wilfully imperfect themselves, are disquieted and grieved at having the goodness of others brought continually before their eyes. It is a silent standing reproach to them.

For example, those who are determined wantonly to neglect the holy duty of mortifying the flesh, cannot bear to see others strict ; they are always inclined to seduce them from their rules of self-denial, or otherwise to interrupt them ; and if they cannot

do so, they generally get out of their sight. Persons of a sour and morose temper are apt to be very greatly provoked by the good humour and sweetness of those of a better mind. The careless about truth, the detracting and slanderous tongue, is not seldom the more restless, for observing that the hearer is scrupulous, and afraid to join in any such conversation; he wants his neighbour, if not to partake of his sin, at least not to keep at such a *very* great distance from the same. And so throughout life, there is a disposition in the unrenewed heart, to grudge all those graces which go too far beyond itself; a disposition to the opposite to that, which the Holy Ghost wrought in S. Barnabas by faith. He rejoiced, but these are sorry, on beholding the grace of God.

It certainly must require no small faith to believe, that it is better on the whole for others to do the good which you desire, than for it to be done by yourself. S. Barnabas must have had his heart steadily fixed on the unseen rewards prepared on high, to make him acquiesce thus joyfully in his companion, S. Paul, receiving so much more of the encouragement provided for apostolical men in this life. Such a mind could hardly be, without deep devotion and forgetfulness of self: such as one may see in S. John Baptist, in his way of speaking of our Blessed Lord, concerning Whom it was a matter of joy to him, to say and think, “^aHe must increase, but I must decrease:” such, again, as in the Old Testament, we read of in the beautiful history of Jonathan, and the way in which he so gladly yielded the first place in every thing to David. Such self-denial,

^a S. John iii. 30.

when regularly kept up, and not only indulged now and then, out of laziness or partial affection, is one of the clearest tokens that God's Holy Spirit is with men, preparing them for eternal glory.

And it is seen in nothing so much, as in making persons continually watchful, to cherish and confirm one another in every good purpose of heart; in which respect the Spirit of the Gospel is most directly opposed to the evil and selfish spirit of this age. For I know not how it is, but people, under pretence of liberty of one sort or another, are come to be, very generally, quite indifferent about the grace and salvation of others. They say, "it is a matter between God and each man's conscience; it is no concern of theirs; they cannot be accountable for other men." But surely words like these, especially when uttered in scornful tones, are too like the cruel and profane talk of the first murderer, Cain; who, when God enquired of him concerning his brother Abel, rudely answered, "^bAm I my brother's keeper?" Surely the hard, indifferent way, in which too many of us treat the thought of our neighbours's condition towards God, is sadly like Cain's way: sadly like the temper which led to a brother's murder.

The Christian, Catholic, renewed heart is altogether different from this; it is not at all satisfied, as men of the world are, with persons going on decently and quietly; it wants them to be inwardly sound and pure; first of all, to have a good "purpose of heart," and then to persevere in that purpose, "cleaving" to our Lord and Saviour continually. That anxiety about your neighbour's soul, which

^b Gen. iv. 9.

Christian love causes you to feel, will be a continual, a watchful, a self-denying, but, for the most part, a *silent* principle. It will shew itself in deeds rather than in words, in timely prevention of mischief, rather than in late and loud remonstrance. It will not be very sanguine, nor reckon too much on any good which appears to be done, knowing that we are all, by nature, as unstable as water. Nor yet will it be too soon disheartened or disconcerted, knowing that there is hope even of the worst, and that constant efforts and prayers, with the Church of God to your aid, will, by the aid of His good Spirit, prevail against every thing but hardened obstinacy.

Above all, this care of others' good purposes, to be at all like that of S. Barnabas, must be accompanied with scrupulously good example; even as it is here said of this holy Apostle, very emphatically, that "he was a good man."

And it will ever keep in view the growth of the Church and kingdom of Jesus Christ, as being the one thing for which it works; and our Lord and Saviour Himself, as being the one Master whom it serves. It works not for a sect or party, but for the holy Apostolical Church herself: as S. Barnabas, not regarding his own or any other Apostle's name, laboured only to have "much people added unto the Lord."

Consequently, such a labourer will never be ashamed to seek out help, when he finds the work getting beyond him, or knows that another will do it better. So S. Barnabas, as was before observed, "departed to Tarsus to seek Saul," and brought him to Antioch; and thus doing, he was instrumental in

providing all the Churches of the Gentiles with the chiefest of all their teachers.

All this refers, of course, more immediately to the office and calling of pastors in the Church of Christ. But every one of us has a part in it, in such measure as we are at any time witnesses of each other's good resolutions, and have the power, by God's good providence, of doing any thing towards confirming our brethren. For example, as often as we offer ourselves to God in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, so often we see the grace of God, bringing many persons, as we trust, with holy purposes, to draw near their Lord and Saviour, in the way He Himself ordained. It becomes us, surely, not only to be glad, but to watch and pray afterwards one for another; and, if need and occasion be, to "exhort one another," that "with purpose of heart" all may "cleave to the Lord" Jesus; all may keep their holy vows, then and there renewed to Him and to His Church. The Holy Communion received together, is a very special bond between Christians, making it their duty to pray each for his brother, and the duty of those, who are any how in authority, to "reprove, rebuke, exhort" without fear: those, I say, who are in authority; for otherwise the office of censurer and reprover is too grave, for any person to presume to take it lightly on himself.

Finally, the good advice of S. Barnabas, here given to the people of Antioch, may well serve as a kind of watchword for all Christians of every station, in times when the faith and the Church are being violently assailed by their enemies. Then is the time to practise a holy obstinacy; not to mind if you be

not able to give reasons, and talk knowingly about things, but “with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord;” that is, to abide by what the Church has taught you, let people say what they will.

This will be called bigotry and stubbornness: and they who are wise in their own conceit will insist on your giving *a reason* for every thing. Well, then, let your reason be given, not in words, but in a holy life. Humbly and meekly, but with all Christian boldness, let us strive to *obey* the Bible, the Church, and the Prayer-book; and so to put the enemies of truth to shame; and, by the whole course of our lives, to exhort those who are partakers with us of the Gospel, that “with purpose of heart they cleave unto the Lord” for ever.

SERMON XXVI.

LARGENESS OF HEART IN S. BARNABAS.

S. BARNABAS' DAY.

GAL. ii. 10.

*"Only they would that we should remember the poor;
the same, which I also was forward to do."*

THIS is the nearest Saint's day to Whit-Sunday; upon which we may observe that S. Barnabas is also one of the first saints, of whom we read by name in the Acts of the Apostles, as having done great things in the Church. The Church began, as you know, on Whit-Sunday, by the coming down of the Holy Ghost on the companions of our Lord. This was their new-birth: it made the greatest possible change in them: before, they were only believing Jews, but now they were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Before, Christ had gone in and out among them: now He had come by His Spirit to dwell in their very hearts and bodies. They believed, they knew, they felt His awful and blessed Presence, as a kind of heaven on earth, into which God had graciously admitted them: and of course they could not much

care for the things of this present world. Accordingly many of them "made haste, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet:" in order that, being free from all earthly cares, they might the more entirely give themselves up to the serving of God in His Church, to a life of devotion and charity. And among these was S. Barnabas, the Apostle whom we commemorate to-day. The collect, as you know, thanks God for endowing him with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost: and the history shews, that one of those gifts was a very bountiful largeness of heart, a desire to spend and be spent for Christ's sake. For he, "a having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet," and thenceforth he was joined to them as one of their body, and became a principal minister of Jesus Christ in making known His Gospel to the Gentiles. And still, wherever he went, he was careful to remember the poor.

Being at Antioch some time after, and knowing that the Christians in Jerusalem were distressed by a famine, he, with S. Paul, took charge of a collection to relieve them. "b The disciples at Antioch, every one according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren which were at Jerusalem: which also they did, and sent it to the elders," that is, to the priests of Jerusalem, "by the hands of Barnabas and Paul." S. Barnabas therefore seems to be the saint, whom Christians are more especially to think of in the collections, which they make from time to time for the relief of poor persons at a distance. He is

^a Acts iv. 37.

^b Ib. xi. 29, 30.

the saint, with whom on such occasions we more especially have communion: as also before the Sacrament of Christ's sacred Body and Blood, when the alms of the faithful are gathered and offered upon the holy Altar, then we may think of S. Barnabas in particular, what delight he took on earth in that portion of the Church's service: and why may we not please ourselves in believing that, where he is now, he still delights in the same? We may be quite sure, at least, that he, with the other Apostles, will welcome, at the last day, those who have tried sincerely to make the most of this His gracious institution for the relief of the poor. To look after the poor of Christ, to gather and distribute alms properly, is indeed a very special gift, and much need have they, to whose lot it falls, of the spirit of S. Barnabas to enable them to do their work properly, to give in the right manner, and to the right persons. We ought to pray for them, and for all who bear in mind the poor and needy, that God, according to an ancient prayer, would make unto them a return by His own rich and precious gifts: granting them, for their earthly things, heavenly; for their corruptible things, incorruptible; for their temporal things, eternal.

Again, there is another special gift, very apparent in S. Barnabas: and that is, the delight he took in putting forward S. Paul, instead of feeling any envy or jealousy or unworthy suspicion towards him: he being the younger man and the chief speaker, and S. Barnabas of course feeling, that, where S. Paul was, he could but have the lower place. Many, even good sort of persons, are sorely tried by this kind of temptation. In many, nay in most things they will

give way: but it is a hard trial to them, contentedly to give up the first place in doing good. S. Barnabas seems to have done so with all his heart. He first interfered to bring S. Paul to the company of Apostles, when he had been converted, and had come to Jerusalem, and the Christians, as might be expected, were shy of him, and even the Apostles would not let him join them at first: “^c But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus the Name of the Lord Jesus.” All this S. Barnabas told the Apostles, and so caused them, to allow Saul as one of their company, whom hitherto they had known by his persecuting only: and some time afterwards, when the Gospel had begun at Antioch, S. Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul, and brought him to Antioch. He feared not to bring in a person more knowing, more winning, more praised and admired, than himself, and from that time forward for some years they went about doing good together, the elder, S. Barnabas, for the most part giving way to the other, and pleased to do so.

In one thing, however, it appears that S. Barnabas was not so inclined to give way. In the last of their journies mentioned in the Acts, Barnabas desired to take with them a nephew of his, “John whose surname was Mark,” perhaps the same who afterwards wrote the Gospel of S. Mark. Now so it was, that this young man had, some time before, gone out with them on a like journey, and had separated from them

^c Acts ix. 27.

without leave, returning home, instead of sharing their labours. S. Paul, remembering this, thought it not good to take him with them again : but S. Barnabas, Mark's uncle, carried away as is likely by the affection which he bore his kinsman, persisted in his wish, and was content rather to part with S. Paul than with Mark. By this we see that family affection and partial love of near relations, good and amiable as it is in itself, may lead even a good person wrong : and is therefore to be well watched, and kept in order by the fear and the love of God. How do we see well-meaning Christians erring grievously and encouraging bad ways, for fear of seeming unkind to those whom they love, when they have unhappily got into such ways ! If we find in our hearts that we care not for this world's treasure, but gladly part with it for the relief of the poor of Christ ; if again we feel ourselves, by God's grace, above the base temptation of envy, and are glad to have others esteemed better than ourselves ; so far by God's grace, it is well : but let us not be content with this. Bountifulness, and an unenvious heart, are singular gifts of the Holy Ghost, but let us earnestly pray that God would add to them a wise severity, that we may not be partial in our ways, nor follow nor encourage anything wrong, though it be our nearest friends whom we have to check, and though it seem never so hard both to them and to ourselves.

SERMON XXVII.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE BIRTH OF S. JOHN BAPTIST.

NATIVITY OF S. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

S. LUKE i. 65, 66.

“All these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea: and all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.”

It is now about 1400 years, since it was remarked on this day by a great Bishop of the Church, S. Augustine, that S. John is the only person, besides our Blessed Lord Himself, whose birthday is kept in the Church. All the other Saints' days, except the Conversion of S. Paul, are their days of martyrdom, or, at least, of departing out of this world. If they are ever called their birthdays, it is because the Church would never have us forget that the death of God's faithful ones, especially of His saints and martyrs, is indeed no death, but a blessed and glorious life. But in the case of this great person, S. John, who was, as our Lord tells us, “more than a prophet,” the

Church has ordained, that we should keep his birth instead of his death. Because it was not only the coming of a great Saint and Martyr into the world, but it was a very great event, the beginning of a new order of things in the Almighty's way of dealing with His people. Other stars were bright, but this was the morning-star. And accordingly God ordained that his nativity should be marked by such a number of glorious miracles as never were seen round any other cradle, save that of the Holy Child Jesus Himself. These miracles, being but imperfectly known to those who were present; when his friends met to circumcise him, sank, however, deep into their hearts, so that they mused within themselves, "What manner of child shall this be?" and those who had faith and patience, and did not let things pass by as in a dream, were in some measure prepared for his coming forth after many years, and bearing such witness as he did to our Saviour.

We have as much cause as they had, and more, to thank God for this great Saint, and the blessings offered us by his preaching and example. Therefore we too shall do well, to consider and treasure up in our hearts, as they did, the many wonders of his conception and birth: what good lessons of holy obedience, of true faith in Jesus Christ, of right understanding as concerns His heavenly kingdom, we may, if we will, glean from this part of the Gospel.

For, indeed, the heavenly Teacher has called our attention to the birth of S. John the Baptist, not by one miracle, but by many, very many following one another. The first was, the holy Angel Gabriel ap-

pearing to Zacharias the father, and so renewing that communication between the inhabitants of heaven and earth, which had been, outwardly and visibly, interrupted for so long a time. For four hundred years, the Jewish people had had no prophet among them : but now God's silence began to be broken, and He shewed Himself again by Angels to His favoured servants. And see to whom and in what place this beginning of blessings was vouchsafed. It was to a priest in the temple, for the more honour of the priest's office, and that all might understand, that God's purpose was not for the law to be destroyed, but fulfilled. It was in the time of Divine Service, for our encouragement in punctual attendance on those solemn offices. It was to one who was righteous before God, walking in all His commandments and ordinances blameless : that men might see more, that such as honour God by holy obedience, He will honour by the gift of divine knowledge. Moreover, the Angel appeared at the time of incense, when Zacharias, as priest, perhaps as high-priest, was alone in that part of the temple, offering up that sweet incense of perfume, which was especially commanded by the law of Moses : and of which we know that it was a token of the prayers of all saints, living and dead, offered up by Christ the great High-Priest on the eternal Altar in heaven. And whilst the priest was offering, the people were praying : i. e. the whole congregation of the children of Israel : for it must have been about the time of one of their most solemn days, when they were more particularly expected to present themselves before the Lord. The priest was offering within the holy place, and

the people praying without, and so the Angel appeared with his gracious message. A clear token, that the way to draw down God's blessings is for all the servants of God on earth to join together in such prayers, as our great and good High Priest in heaven will present, united with His own Intercession, on the Altar before the Throne of grace. But you will observe that the people were praying without: they did not rudely thrust in, where they knew the priest only should be. This is an encouragement to holy reverence and reserve: it should warn us to be very careful, how we draw near those things, on which the great and dreadful God has in any way set His seal, and the places where He has promised to be. Even in thought, we must shrink and draw back, knowing our own great unworthiness, and the danger of treating holy things as common, under the plea of great love and affection for our Saviour.

Mark, again, where the Angel appeared: it was on the right side of the Altar of Incense: the very same place, most likely, where S. John, in the Revelation, saw the Angel standing by the Altar in heaven: which may shew us that things in earth, and more especially things in the Church, are but types and shadows of the better things above, and may teach us therefore to be ever lifting up our hearts, above what we see with our eyes. The Angel's first words, too, are the greatest encouragement to humble prayer: especially such prayer as God's ministers make for His Church. "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard." What prayer? It was not likely under all the circumstances, that Zacharias should have been praying for the blessing

of children. Rather it should seem that what the Angel speaks of is the prayer, which he, as priest, had been offering up for the whole people, that God would give them that deliverance, which the old Scriptures promised. We may judge by the hymn which he uttered soon afterwards, how full his mind was of the promises to Abraham and David, and to the rest of the holy prophets, which had been since the world began. Therefore we may well judge that he had now been praying for that great Redemption; for which, accordingly, the Angel promises that the way was now to be prepared by a son which should be born to Zacharias for that purpose.

Then it is to be observed that the mercy promised, the barren woman keeping house, and becoming a joyful mother of children, was not altogether a new thing among the Jews. There were several remarkable instances of it in the Old Testament, more especially Samson and Samuel, who, being raised up to be in several ways the relievers of God's chosen people, were both born miraculously of women supposed to be barren: and again, both of them were Nazarites from their mothers' womb, i. e. they were especially devoted to God, and in token of their being so given up to Him, no razor was to come upon their heads, and they were never to taste wine or strong drink: the Almighty thus giving us a token, that he who would serve Him in earnest must lay the foundation in Christian soberness: his joys must be heavenly not earthly: he must not be drunk with wine, but must be filled with the Spirit. As a further token of an especial blessing on the child thus promised, his name, John, was fixed beforehand: as had been usual in the ear-

lier times of God's dealings with the Jews. When persons were raised up for any great purpose, their names were given, some time before they were born, by special message from the Almighty: and very often they were changed afterwards.

All these tokens went along with the sight of the Angel to convince Zacharias, had he considered them, that it was a true message. But when he still continued unbelieving, and demanded a sign, another and severer token was given unto him. His speech, and as it seems, his hearing, was taken away for a time. As he was slow to believe the Lord's gracious promise, so, when he was convinced of the truth of it, he was not allowed the honour and happiness of being first to make it known. Yet he became immediately, to thoughtful persons, a witness of some great thing to be expected. For when he came out of the temple, and found them marvelling why he tarried so long, they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, made certain signs, but remained, till his son's birth, speechless. This would naturally set those of them who were considerate on musing, what should happen. It would go along with other tokens both in Scripture and in providence, which caused many about that time to look for redemption in Israel.

The next miracle was Elizabeth's conception, after which she hid herself five months; but in the sixth month that also was miraculously made known to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Elizabeth's cousin, by the same Angel who appeared to Zacharias. It was a token, not asked for, but given: given not to chasten

and correct her, as the loss of speech corrected Zacharias, but to encourage and partly reward her obedient faith. Accordingly very soon after she heard of it, she hastened to see Elizabeth, and to congratulate her; not as at all doubting what had happened, but as desiring to see her cousin, and abide with her a while, that they might rejoice and give thanks and exercise devotion together. This gave occasion to more than one additional miracle: the first, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb for joy. It pleased God that His great servant S. John Baptist, as his whole life was to be spent in bearing witness to our Saviour, and preparing His way, so he should begin to acknowledge Him, even before either of them was yet born. And hereupon Elizabeth, being filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied, and acknowledged Christ her Lord and the Blessed Virgin by that title which she has ever since borne in the Churches, the Mother of her Lord, or the Mother of God. The whole history is wonderfully fitted to teach us, that every thing, both great and what seems little and ordinary, relating to our Blessed Lord, is indeed great, wonderful and holy: all that we here look on is a miracle. How should it be any other, when He to Whom it appertains is the Most High God made Man?

And still, as the time came nearer for Jesus Christ to be born, the tokens of a heavenly Presence increase upon us. When Elizabeth's full time was at last over, and she brought forth a son, and her friends came together to the circumcision of the child, which was the time for naming it, as Baptism is

with us: they wanted to call it Zacharias, after the name of his father: but his mother, guided by the same Spirit which had taught her how to salute the Blessed Virgin, insisted on his being called John, the name which the Angel had fixed; and when they remonstrated, and by signs asked his father, and he wrote (for he could not speak) "His name is John," they understood this to be another token of a particular providence in this matter: and we read that "they marvelled all." But not even yet was there an end of the wonders, relating to the birth of S. John. For his father had no sooner fixed on the name John, in obedience to the Angelic vision, and in full faith, now, that it would all be accomplished, than his mouth was opened, "and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." And the first use he made of his restored voice was to prophesy, praising God for His great mercy, for the dim twilight and the dawning of that brighter day, which he knew by the Holy Ghost, was now at hand.

With so great an array of miracles did it please God to accompany the birth of His Son's Fore-runner: and so great reason have we, when we read of it, to be filled with awe and trembling, as at something of heaven upon earth; something, which seems to bring us into God's immediate Presence. And consider: if Christ's Fore-runner was so sacred a person, that every thing about *him* was holy and wonderful; what manner of persons ought we to be, who have been brought into such near communion and fellowship with Christ Himself, as to be called bone of His Bone, and flesh of His Flesh! All these miracles and prophecies, and the whole history of S. John the

Baptist, was but meant to prepare men to receive Christ Himself worthily. What holy conversation and godliness, what true and entire repentance, what humble self-abasement and confession of sins ought there to be in us, the least of whom, in that he is already in the heavenly kingdom, is a greater prophet, is trusted with more of the truth of God to convert men withal, than was S. John Baptist himself. Are we living, indeed, as persons aware of this? Lastly, we shall do well perhaps, to observe the very silent and gradual manner in which this great saint, and through him our Lord Himself, was introduced to the world. First, there is an aged priest alone in the temple: there is deep silence: the people are praying without: an Angel appears to him only, and when he proves unbelieving, the judgment laid upon him is of such a sort, as still to keep the matter more secret. Then his wife, being aware of the blessing, hides herself: only a poor maiden, her cousin, hears of it secretly by the same Angel, and they passed their time together in retirement until "Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered." Then when people's attention is drawn to the matter by the many miracles which accompanied his birth, still they have no idea of the infinitely greater miracle, which had even then taken place, and of which this was only a sign: the Incarnation of the Son of God. They say among themselves, What manner of child shall this be? and expect great things of him: but for many years nothing comes of it: a generation, or near it, passes away, and he remains in the desert. But all the while the hand of the Lord is with him. He grows, and waxes strong

in spirit: and bye and bye he comes forth in the spirit and power of Elias, and prepares the way of Christ by preaching of repentance.

All this is very unlike what men would have expected beforehand, had they been left to conjecture the manner in which the kingdom of heaven would be set up: very unlike the ways of this world: very unlike our own impatient thoughts, when we are entering on what we suppose to be good works. It will be a good lesson for us all, from the Gospel history of S. John Baptist's birth that we mingle our deep sense of God's presence among Christians with an exceeding care and fear, not to make His Holy Name common: to go on modestly, silently, gradually, in one word very humbly, both in our endeavours to do good to others, and in our own use of our Christian privileges. For it is not so much in the storm, the earthquake, and the fire, that our God draws near to His people, as in the still small voice: in silent, serious, penitent thoughts, daily and hourly filling our hearts; and in the calm and regular devotions, and most of all in the Sacraments, of His Holy Universal Church.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE SEVENFOLD GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST, MANIFESTED IN SAINT JOHN BAPTIST.

NATIVITY OF S. JOHN BAPTIST.

S. LUKE i. 15.

*“He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from
his mother’s womb.”*

S. JOHN BAPTIST (as you know) is, in time, the first saint of the New Testament, the first to whom the attention of God’s people was drawn when the new order of things, the kingdom of God, was dawning on the earth. The voice of that blessed Angel who appeared to Zacharias broke, not the silence of the temple only, when all the people were praying without at the time of incense, and Zacharias only standing before the Altar: it broke the silence of three or four hundred years, during which God had ceased to speak to His people by His prophetic Spirit, and the immediate blessing, the token of favour, which it promised was, that a great prophet should be born of the aged Elizabeth, a very holy person, one great in the sight of the Lord, one who should be “filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”

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And we know that this wonderful child was in such sort filled with the Holy Ghost, that even before he was born he prophesied ; he leaped in his mother's womb for joy at the invisible Presence of Jesus Christ, very soon after His becoming Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary ; within a few hours of His being conceived in the womb. Thus early did the Angel's word begin to be accomplished, in respect of the child's prophetic power and wisdom : and the Church has always believed, that he was in other respects also filled with the Holy Ghost, a vessel sanctified and made meet for his Master's use, from the very first moment that he came into the world. From his mother's womb he was sealed and called to be a saint. To him then we naturally look, as to a kind of type or standard of the saints of the New Testament : and we keep the day of his Nativity rather even than that of his martyrdom. It is marked as the first early dawn of a day brighter than ever, thenceforth to arise upon the earth : a day, in which the sons and daughters of God's people should be filled with the Holy Ghost, from their very early childhood. For S. John, inasmuch as he is a saint, i.e. great in the sight, not of men but of the Lord Himself, for holiness, is a pattern for all Christian people. As a prophet and a preacher, his example reaches but to a few in comparison. But as a saint, I repeat it, he is a pattern for all : seeing that to all, men, women and children, one as much as another, the word is spoken ; “^a Be ye holy ; for I the Lord, your God, am Holy.”

Now the Holy Ghost, the sanctifying Spirit, is

^a Lev. xix. 2.

known by His fruits : by holiness and righteousness in the thoughts of men's hearts, in the words of their lips, and in the actions which they do : and of this our first pattern of Gospel-holiness enough is related in the four holy Gospels, to shew how great he was in every part of Christian goodness ; how completely he had gained the victory over all kinds of deadly sin. To make this plain to you in a few words, I would put you in mind that the power of evil is represented to us in Holy Scripture as having seven heads, and that our Lord, describing an extreme condition of wickedness, warns us that the unclean spirit, once cast out and allowed to return, will bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself : whereby the Church has always understood that there are seven kinds of deadly sin ; and on the other hand there are seven spirits of God : seven holy and heavenly graces of the Blessed Spirit, which if a man will encourage and not quench in his own heart, our gracious Lord will by them prepare that man to receive His blessing for ever. A saintly person then is he who, by the help of God's good Spirit, gains an entire victory over all these seven deadly sins, and obtains a full overflowing measure of all these seven Christian graces or virtues : one who, not now and then, but always, overcometh pride by humility, covetousness by bounty, luxury and lust by purity, gluttony by self-denial, anger by meekness, envy by charity, sloth by active obedience. These are seven great tasks, which the servants and workmen of God our Saviour have to accomplish and work out during their abode in this world : and Holy Scripture tells us enough of the blessed Baptist, the foremost of the

Gospel saints, to shew in what perfection he by God's help practised all these precious virtues. The first of them, in which we read of his excelling, is the virtue of active obedience, as set against the deadly sin of sloth, i.e. wilful lukewarmness and languor in spiritual things. “^b The child grew and waxed strong in spirit :” the Holy Ghost, of which he was full, made him earnest and courageous and constant in serving God, even while he was yet a boy. We may be sure that he was not moved, in his very childhood, from what he knew to be right, by the foolish laughter of his comrades, or by any tempting amusement of the hour. We may be sure that then as ever after (as the collect affirms of him) he constantly spake the truth. We may be sure that he did not draw back from hardship pain and self-denial, in the little matters whereby boys are tried and trained, any more than, when his time came, he shrank from the severities of the desert, from prison and from martyrdom. In all these ways, depend upon it, the young child, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, overcame the bad spirit of sloth, generally the first by which young people are tried, in his very early years, and devoted himself regularly and steadily to his God only.

Thus he obtained grace from his Saviour to fight the second and to many the hardest fight, signified in that other saying, he “^c was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel ;” i. e. he kept himself alone with his God : he was resolute and ready, at whatever cost, in giving up all company which would draw him away from Him Whom his

^b S. Luke i. 80.^c Ib.

soul loved : so he perfectly got the better of all sinful lust and luxury. That which alas ! is so much too hard for so very many of our young people, had no power against him, it could not at all come nigh to hurt him. The Holy Spirit of which he was full, and which he took care to cherish by regular and devout prayer (for, as he taught his disciples to pray, so we may be sure that he prayed regularly himself), the Holy Spirit did so fill and inflame him with the pure love of his God and Saviour, that there was no room at all left in his heart for any shameful unclean affection. Alas, that so few young Christians should be like him ! and yet all are so far partakers of the gift which made him what he was, that they too are filled with the Holy Ghost : the Holy Spirit of Regeneration has dwelt in them, not indeed from their mother's womb, but from the time of their being made members of Christ in Baptism. Alas ! that instead of keeping themselves pure by the Holy Ghost which is given them, so many should make haste to drive away the Holy Ghost by all kinds of wilful impurity.

But further : in order to overcome uncleanness and luxury, the Baptist completely overcame greediness and gluttony. He came, neither eating flesh nor drinking wine : so great was his abstemiousness and self-denial, that many said, " he hath a devil." His meals, compared with the ordinary meals of other men, were so sparing, so few, and so coarse, that his whole life might be called a perpetual fast. It is not for nothing, brethren, depend upon it, that these things are set down of the holy Baptist. The rules which he set himself in eating and drinking, we may

be quite sure, were parts of his holiness: they must have been of great consequence: the Angel's message to his father makes particular mention of them: "d He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink." After this, can you think it a light thing, how you conduct yourself in regard of your bodily appetites? Can you think you have a right to please yourself, as far as you can afford it? The saints of Christ, and the holy Baptist, as the first of them, would teach you to think very differently.

But supposing a man keeps himself in order, in respect of these sensual delights, there is another wicked spirit lying in wait to get hold of him, i. e. the love of money, or covetousness: and here again we see how the Baptist overcame. He dwelt in the desert: we may well believe of him what we read of his Master, that he had not "where to lay his head." Our Lord Himself took notice of the Baptist's poor self-denying way of life. "e What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts." As if he should say, What does this man care for wealth or enjoyment? look at his raiment of camel's hair, observe his diet, of locusts and wild honey, it is what he has chosen of his own accord: he chooses to be poor for the kingdom of God's sake; the world is nothing to him, nor he to the world. Thus we have the testimony of Him Who trieth the reins and the hearts, how effectually the Holy Ghost, of which

d S. Luke i. 15.

e Ib. vii. 24, 25.

S. John Baptist was full, prevented the love of money, which is the root of all evil, from taking any hold of him. Thus was he armed against covetousness, the fourth deadly sin.

The fifth is anger and malice, which the Baptist, like his Lord afterwards, overcame by meekness and patient suffering; quietly yielding up his life, when the time came, to the executioner's blow. And so he became the last martyr of the law, the nearest to our Saviour on one side, as S. Stephen is on the other: and the history of his death seals to us this comfortable lesson, that what the children and servants suffer willingly and patiently for the sake of keeping His commandments, is blessed by Him with something like the reward of martyrdom, as well as what they endure in more direct testimony to the truths of His holy Creed. S. John Baptist was counted a martyr, being slain for remonstrating against a wicked marriage, no less than S. Stephen, who was slain for acknowledging Jesus to be the Son of God standing on the Right Hand.

But when people have got over these more ordinary passions, the devil has a subtle way of tempting them to two sins in particular; the last perhaps and hardest of the seven wicked spirits to drive out: those sins are pride and envy. Now how far the Baptist was from pride, how his heart delighted in humbling himself, we know by his way of preferring Jesus (of Whom men as yet knew nothing) to himself. Men were musing in their hearts, whether he were the Christ or no: he seemed so great and good, they could not think enough of him: then it is plain that he made haste, he spake with all the fervour of an earn-

est soul, saying, "I baptize with water, but there standeth One among you, Whom ye know not. He it is Who, coming after me, is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." As for himself, he was but a voice, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness;" he might baptize with water, "but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He did not merely say all this, but he said it in such a manner, that all men hearing it must know, it was the very joy of his heart to humble himself under the feet of the lowly Jesus. And again it was a deep and sore pain to him, when he was called on to baptize his Lord: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" Until he clearly understood that it was Jesus' Will, for high purposes of His heavenly kingdom, he could by no means make up his mind to it: the honour was far more distressing to him, than to most men disgrace would be.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit in arming S. John against pride had armed him against envy also. Envy, that most hateful, yet sometimes, hardest to cure of all these spiritual sins. Sometimes it happens that when people are brought down to have a really low opinion of themselves, they nevertheless (wanting the true love of God and of their neighbour) begin to repine against others, more favoured and fortunate, as they imagine, than themselves. Whereas true love rejoices in all the superiority of the beloved; and thinks it not at all hard, if itself be entirely left out, and all God's prizes and rewards be given to another. Of this high

^f S. Luke iii. 16. ^g S. Matt. iii. 14.

and very blessed grace S. John Baptist left us an eminent example, in his way of congratulating himself and his disciples on the greater glory of our Saviour. "He must increase, but I *must* decrease." "^h He that hath the bride is the bridegroom : but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice : this my joy therefore is fulfilled." We should not, I apprehend, make any great mistake, were we to say this was probably the last and hardest task to such a spirit, when he had set his heart upon great schemes for doing good, when the very world had shewn itself disposed to regard him as a burning and shining light, when "ⁱ there came out unto his baptism Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan," and even the wicked Herod heard him gladly, and did many things by his advice : and, after all, in a very short time he found that his task was over, he had his discharge, he was going to be laid aside and put by as a vessel that could be of no more use in God's household : to take *that* cheerfully was indeed triumphing over the last and worst of the unclean spirits, envy. I do not, of course, mean that the blessed S. John himself had any struggle or difficulty in his own mind : any pain or disappointment to reconcile himself to, when he found that his Master's time was come, and he, as the evening star, was to retire before the sun. For that very cause came he into the world ; on that errand he knew that he was sent from the beginning : but the joy and thankfulness, with which he always accepted it, was the victory of faith and holiness in him over the dislike which

^h S. John iii. 29.

ⁱ S. Matt. iii. 5.

the natural man would have felt at being so compelled to decrease while another was increasing. And having this mind he went on even to the end, in prison or out of prison, ever bearing witness to Christ, and teaching us by his example to be loving and zealous towards God, to subdue and put away all temptations to sloth and lukewarmness, in decay and in death no less than in the day-spring of life: that, as he began by being strong in spirit, devoting himself to his God with his whole heart, so he might end by the sacrifice of a perfect martyrdom. And so he completed his sevenfold crown of saintliness: by the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost, whereof he was full, defeating the manifold snares and assaults of the devil.

But now, my brethren, I pray you, attend to this; for this is what comes home to you and me and every Christian. We know that even as the holy Baptist was as nothing compared with his holiest Lord, so there is a sense, in which you and I, and every one, the least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than John the Baptist. For thus speaks the Truth: “^k Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.” Not greater, of course, in actual holiness, but greater in privileges, greater in respect of being really a member of Christ, which S. John could not be, because the Holy Ghost for that purpose was not given until our Lord was glorified. In that sense, we are all of us greater prophets than this greatest of the old prophets; and

^k S. Matt. xi. 11.

again by our baptismal covenant we are filled with the Holy Ghost: not indeed from our mother's womb, but from the moment when our spiritual mother, the Church, received us from our Saviour's arms, to be nursed for Him as His own children. Whose fault is it then, if we are not, one and all, holy with the same kind of holiness wherewith the blessed Baptist was endowed? Holiness and grace sevenfold, to deliver us from the power and evil mark of every one of the seven wicked spirits. Why are we not happy learners in his school? Why are we not every one of us witnesses to Jesus Christ, preparing His way against His second Coming? Why are we not charitably earnest, each in his own place and measure, in turning as many as possible to the Lord our God? All this we must sincerely and constantly endeavour to be, or we shall never be holy with a holiness like that of S. John; and without such holiness, the Truth has told us, "no man shall see the Lord."

SERMON XXIX.

SELF-DENYING LOYALTY TO CHRIST.

S. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

S. JOHN iii. 30.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.”

No doubt, S. John the Baptist is, in a particular sense, an example for the clergy, more than for other Christians. As he was sent to prepare the way for our Lord's first Coming, so they are sent to prepare the way for His second. They, as he, are to go before Christ, in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for Him.

Many parts, therefore, of his character and conduct, are a direct pattern for those only, who were sent, as he was; they do not so immediately concern others, who have no such trust.

As, for example, his “boldly rebuking vice,” which is mentioned in the collect for the day as one remarkable part of his character, and which he practised both towards the Scribes and Pharisees, when he called them a generation of vipers; and in warning Herod of the consequences, if he took his brother's wife to be his own. In this S. John was a pattern,

first and chiefly, for the ministers of Christ : for it is they who have a direct commission from Him to call people to account for their sins, and to judge them, for a while, in His stead. But he is also a pattern for all who are in any way trusted with the government of others, as kings, masters, elders, friends who can advise. Those whose station calls on them to do good by reproof, must try to do it as S. John did, faithfully, discreetly, and boldly : still, as I said, it is the calling of Christ's ministers especially. And the same may be said of all other parts of the Baptist's example. He set a copy, in the first place, for priests. But in that sense in which all Christians are priests, appointed to offer up themselves, their souls and bodies, for a living sacrifice to God Almighty, and to prepare, each in his station, the way of Christ : in that sense the Baptist's example was meant for all, and ought to be followed by all. Observe how he, in his calling, made ready his Saviour's way, and let us in our several callings endeavour to make ready our Judge's way.

And above all, let us try to enter into the spirit of that deep and affectionate loyalty, if I may call it so, to our Lord, which is every where to be seen in the holy Baptist's character. I mean, his not thinking of himself but of his Master ; giving up every thing to His glory ; rejoicing, as he went on, to find that Jesus Christ every day was shewing Himself more and more glorious above him, and throwing him quite, as people say, into the shade. This is the feeling which S. John expresses in the text, on complaint having been made to him by some of his own disciples, " Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond

Jordan, to Whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto Him." They said it, in the way of complaint, thinking it hard that their master should be surpassed and thought less of, in consequence of the rising of this new Prophet, of Whom as yet they knew hardly any thing. Upon this, Christ's faithful servant and fore-runner took occasion to utter, in express words, that, which in reality all his ministry had been bearing witness of, that he had no power, no glory, no holiness of his own; he was but a servant, ministering, for a time, to One Who was unspeakably, immeasurably greater than himself. "A man," a mere man such as I am, he tells them, "can receive nothing, except it be given him from above." I am such an one, and I must not go beyond my commission. "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but am sent before Him." He takes up his disciples' word, which they had just used, saying, "He to Whom thou barest witness." And he says, "If I bare witness to Him then, do not expect me to contradict that witness now. On the contrary, I tell you, that in the great work of God, which is about to begin, the setting up of the kingdom of heaven, there is the same kind of difference between Him and me, as, in a marriage, between the bridegroom and the bridegroom's friend:" "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." "Every day," S. John seems to tell them, "I have more and more of the same kind of satisfaction, which a true disinterested

friend of any man has in his friend's happy marriage. Every day I rejoice more and more, in feeling that I am nothing, and that He is all; that He must increase, but I must decrease."

This is what I mean by S. John's *loyal* feeling; his deep and constant devotion of himself to our Lord; the deeper and more constant, as he had, in the eye of the world and the flesh, to lose something by our Lord's being honoured. His "burning and shining light" was to be, in comparison, put out and to disappear, like a star, or rather like a lamp, when the sun arises. And he is glad and thankful to have it so: like Jonathan, who truly rejoiced in seeing David by degrees mounting up to the kingdom, which, according to earthly ways of thinking, Jonathan might have looked for himself.

This loyal and self-devoted feeling, S. John here expresses in words; but his whole life and conduct before had expressed it, to a considerate mind, quite as clearly. Even before his birth, it was provided that he should give signification of such a devout mind. When Elizabeth, being with child of him, was visited by the Blessed Virgin, just after the conception of our Lord, this great miracle happened; that "as soon as the voice of Mary's salutation sounded in Elizabeth's ears, the babe leaped in her womb for joy." This token he gave of the Holy Ghost, with which he was filled, even from his mother's womb, that even then, before his birth, he did homage, and shewed forth devotion to our Saviour. It was a type and ensample of what he should be, what all faithful Christians should be, as long as they live in the world: they should sacrifice

and devote themselves entirely to the glory and honour of Him Who came to die for them.

Accordingly, when S. John's time came to preach and to baptize, all his doctrine ran upon this; that neither his preaching nor his baptism was any thing at all in itself, but only to prepare the way for the perfect Gospel, the spiritual Baptism, which Jesus Christ should set up afterwards. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand:" it is not come, it is only near. "I am not the Christ, but am sent before Him." "I baptize you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." He is "mightier than I." "His shoes' latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

It may seem again suitable to this dutiful temper of mind, that S. John, when the people asked him what they should do, referred them always to the plainest and simplest duties, the very thing, as it were, which came next in each man's way; saying to the common sort, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." Again, to the publicans, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" and to the soldiers, "Do violence to no man." In every instance, the advice, which he gives, was as plain and simple as could be, not at all leading them to think of him, nor of any particular wisdom or goodness that was in him, but only to glorify God in their stations by sincere obedience.

So again, the Baptist never shrank from shewing people the severe side of the truth. "The wrath to come," "the unquenchable fire," "the axe laid to

the root of the trees:" these are the things of which he continually kept putting people in mind: but these are not the subjects, on which he would have delighted to dwell, had he desired to please and attract his hearers, or to obtain personal influence and authority with them.

But in this respect, as in all others, the Forerunner of Christ was like His Apostles after Him: he preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

One who was so minded would of course be greatly astonished, not to say shocked, at our Lord's coming to be baptized of him; and we know how S. John shrank from it. "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" It would seem to him quite a turning of things upside down: knowing, as he had done from the beginning, that Christ was to increase, and he to decrease. He might not indeed yet positively know, that this was the Son of God; yet he might know enough to make him, in some measure, doubt and muse, Who and how great He might prove. And this being so, he could not endure the thought of putting himself at all before Him.

Then, after our Lord had been baptized, and the holy Baptist knew for certain, that "this is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," see how he rejoiced on every occasion to make Him known, to spread His glory, to cause all men, and especially his own disciples, to come near and believe in Christ. Another person, though he might for duty's sake send men away from himself to our Lord, might yet perhaps feel more or less troubled at doing so; it might be an act of self-denial to him; but S. John's behaviour

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every where shews that it was the very joy of his heart to do so, the very purpose for which he lived, the object which he had always in view. Therefore he loses no time, but the very next day he makes haste to shew our Lord to his disciples, with that mysterious saying, "Behold the Lamb of God:" words which, to the world's end, will bring with them the remembrance of this great saint to all well-instructed Christians, and will encourage them, forgetting their own ease and glory, to press on, and do their very best, by example first, and then in other ways, to honour Christ crucified, and make Him better known to their brethren.

Finally, in the last of his trials, his imprisonment through the malice of Herodias, we find him still of the same mind, still careful to turn all, as well as he could, to the preparing of Christ's way; still anxious to put himself down, and to exalt his Master and Saviour. For this purpose, having "heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples" with the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" He could not be ignorant Who Jesus was, after what he had seen at His Baptism: but no doubt his intention was, to shew his disciples the truth concerning Him. Thus he died, as he had lived, pointing out Jesus to men.

Now there is one point in particular which we may well learn this day, from considering S. John Baptist's character: namely, that in such measure as we are duly preparing to meet Christ, when He comes to be our Judge, in the same measure we shall be still practising to humble ourselves more and more; to think less of what we do or have done,

and more of Him and His great unspeakable mercies. We shall no longer anxiously and grudgingly count the moments, the minutes, the hours, which we spend on serving Christ in His Church, but every little time we can win for that holy employment, away from the world, we shall reckon it clear gain. The more we can give, the more yet shall we contrive to spare: every step in any kind of holiness will be to us like a step upwards in a high mountain, revealing to our sight fresh blessings and fresh duties, beyond what we had ever dreamed of, until the last and most blessed step of all shall land us in the paradise of God; there, with the blessed Baptist, and all the saints, to await the full revelation of that kingdom, for which, by God's help, we shall have truly tried to prepare ourselves.

SERMON XXX.

THE NAME AND CHARACTER OF S. PETER IS
COMMON TO ALL CHRISTIANS.

S. PETER'S DAY.

S. JOHN i. 42.

“And Jesus said unto him, Thou art Simon the son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephas : which is by interpretation, a stone.”

WHEN God names any person by the name of any grace or power, He gives that person also a gift, to be or to become that which He names it: as to Abraham, to be a father of many nations; to Isaac, that he should be a joy to his father; to Israel, that he should have a kind of royal dignity from God; to S. John the Baptist, that he should be gracious and highly favoured (for that is the meaning of the name John), to the sons of Zebedee, called Boanerges, that in their preaching they should be grave and awful like thunder, and to the Blessed Jesus Himself, that He should be the Lord Incarnate, saving His people from their sins. No doubt then, when our Blessed Lord gave to Simon the surname of Peter, at his very first introduction to Him by his brother S. Andrew,

the name was not simply a mark of honour, but was a pledge and sure token of the many excellent gifts, which, as our collect to-day signifies, Almighty God by His Son Jesus Christ was intending to give to His Apostle S. Peter. I am going (please God) to consider some of those gifts, what we are to learn from them, and how greatly we ourselves are concerned in them. But, first of all, I would just point out, that you and I and all Christians are so far like S. Peter, in that we have received each a new name from our Saviour. We received it, as you know, in Baptism, not from our parents, but from our god-fathers and godmothers, i.e. from the Church of God acting in the Name and on the behalf of Christ Himself. And like S. Peter's name, *it* also was and is the pledge and sure token of many good gifts; yea, of the best and most excellent of all gifts, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost." O then, let us make much of our Christian name, and of the unspeakable blessings betokened by it; as you may be quite sure the holy men of old did, in respect of the several names which God gave them and of the mercies sealed to them thereby. Let the great and good name, Christian, be to us more, infinitely more, than any name we could possibly have besides. Let it always put us in mind that we are partakers of a Divine nature, "having escaped the corruption, which is in the world through lust," and let us be, above all things, afraid and ashamed to disgrace it. Thus much for the name or title Christians, which we have in common with S. Peter and all the saints. Now I am going to say something of the special gifts and

graces pledged to Simon son of Jonah by our Divine Master, in saying to him, "Thou shalt be called Peter." Jesus Himself, a while afterwards, explained His meaning in that saying. It was towards the end of His ministry, when He had gone apart with His disciples, and asked them the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" knowing beforehand, which of them would answer, and what. (You heard it in the Gospel just now). Then it was, that Simon son of Jonas, not in his own name only, but in that of all the Apostles, made answer and said, "The Christ of God:" "a Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." He had made the like answer, then likewise in the name of all the rest, to a like enquiry of our Lord's not long before. When some, offended at His words, "b went back and walked no more with Him," He said to the twelve, "Will you also go away?" and Simon Peter, as his manner was, spake up eagerly for the rest and said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Then, you see, he made the same confession as afterwards, both times, as I said, not in his own name only, but in the name of the whole college of Apostles; and as, at the first time, he received a word of warning, for each one of them quite as much as for himself, so this second time he received a blessing for them all, and was made to understand that his own name, given him so long before, had been prophetic of that blessing, and was to be a memorial of the same for ever. "c Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but My Father which is in

a S. Matt. xvi. 16.

b S. John vi. 66—68.

c S. Matt. xvi. 17—19.

heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." As if He should say (if we may reverently interpret His words) "Thou hast confessed Me, and now I confess thee: even as I will all believers at the Day of Judgement. Thou hast found favour in My sight, and I know thee by name, and the name, by which I and all My saints shall know thee, shall be one which I have already given thee, and of which I will now tell thee the meaning." "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter: I have called, and do call thee, Rock, in order that thou and all men may know that the Faith which thou hast now professed is the sure foundation of all faith: that I Who am the true Rock will join thee to Myself and make thee a Rock also, a part and a chief part of the 'foundation of the Apostles and prophets,' on which the Church shall be built, 'Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-Stone.'"

Thus we see that first of all, S. Peter had the great blessing of being named after our Lord's own Name: for one of His Names is the Rock, as it is written, "That Rock was Christ." Next, that to him, by nature unsteady and wavering, the Holy Jesus would communicate a portion of His own unchangeable steadfastness, which should carry him through the worst of trials, and keep him from falling, and, through him, innumerable others: according to the assurance which

^d 1 Cor. x. 4.

he received not long after, in the hour of danger, from the same compassionate Lord: “^e I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Thirdly, that as an Apostle, and in a certain sense the first in order of the Apostles, and the one who stood for all the rest, he should be one of the foundation stones, through whom the whole Christian people, as the rest of the building, should be fitly framed together and joined on to the Head-Corner-Stone, which is Christ. For this we have the express word of Scripture, spoken unto us and unto all other Christians: “‘Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner *stone*;” and S. John in the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, i. e. the Church of the Living God, saw that the City had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. In this S. Peter has no more promised to him than to any other of the twelve, for whom he had witnessed the good confession. But in one respect, as the course of providence afterwards shewed, he was more favoured than the rest: he had the honour given him to be the first who should preach the blessed Gospel both to the Jews and also to the Gentiles: to the Jews, as you remember, on the great day of Pentecost itself, when he lifted up his voice (not alone, but) with the eleven, and made known unto the multitude of Israelites Christ crucified and risen again and coming down from heaven by His Spirit: at which time there were converted about three-thousand souls. To the Gentiles also (as I hardly need mention) the same S. Peter

^e S. Luke xxii. 32.

^f Ephes. ii. 20.

by the Holy Ghost opened the door of faith, when, no long time after, he was sent to preach the same Gospel to Cornelius the Roman centurion and his household. In this sense, both Jew and Gentile were added to the Church by S. Peter, and the holy city might be said to be builded on him.

And now the question may be asked, Did our Lord take all this care for S. Peter only, or saith He it in a great measure for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: for our sakes those many excellent gifts were given to the beloved disciples, whether to S. Peter as at this time, or to S. John at other times. To all believers, through S. Peter, it is declared, "I say unto thee, that thou art a Rock, by virtue of thy faith in Me, and communion with Me. Hold fast that which thou hast, and thou shalt abide for ever. I, for My part, shall never leave thee nor forsake thee: only let no man take thy crown." Now this perseverance will depend upon two things: first we must abide upon the Rock by cleaving to the true faith of Christ: that Jesus the Son of Mary is God, the Son of the living God. That is S. Peter's good confession, which he made not only with his lips but with his life. In true and deep love he made it, and that with all his heart and soul: and so when unhappily, in a moment of weakness overcoming his better mind, he was tempted to deny his Lord before men, and to say three times, "I know Him not," still the deep love for Christ, which abode in his heart, would not suffer him to be contented in his sin: his Lord had but to turn on him, just once, His loving upbraiding Eye, and he was smitten to the heart, and went out and wept bitterly. Be it our

care, my brethren, and our earnest prayer, every one of us, to abide so truly and lovingly in the Faith of Christ, God and Man, that, if ever we should be grievously tempted, we may have that blessed Faith always at hand, to keep us from falling, or to recover us, the moment we have fallen. It was a miserable thing that the great Apostle's fear so far prevailed on him for a moment, as to make him in words renounce and deny his Saviour: but it was a blessed thing for him that his love of Christ had kept him so near his Master, and so constantly looking towards Him, that the gracious countenance was not turned vainly upon him; he did but catch his Lord's Eye, and repented in a moment, never to fall again.

But as this promise to S. Peter teaches, that we must keep the Faith if we would continue on the Rock, so our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount teaches, that if we would build on the Rock we must keep the commandments. “^s Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like a man that built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock.” Because the obedient and dutiful Christian, and he only, is building on the rock which is Christ. Every one, you will observe, must in God's sight be a builder: you cannot lie still and do nothing; if you are not building Sion, you must be building Babel; if you are not gathering with Christ, you are scattering: there is no such thing as a mere negative goodness: and this our Lord signifies by saying, he that heareth, and *doeth not*, is “^hlike unto him that without a foundation built his house upon

^s S. Luke vi. 47, 48.

^h Ib. 49.

the sand." He does not, you observe, say, He that heareth, and openly disobeyeth, but, He that heareth and doeth not. You must work the work of the Lord in earnest, not simply withdraw from gross sin, else you do not build on the Rock. And you must never for a moment depend upon your right and sound faith in Christ, as a make-up, a compensation for your indulging in any wrong way. How many are there, who go on carelessly, or even wickedly, for many years, it may be through the whole of a long life, and when they see death and eternity at hand, make themselves easy with the reflection, that, however, they never trusted in their own works or doings, they always depended, and do yet depend, upon being saved at last by the infinite mercy of Him Who died on the Cross for them ! And truly we can be saved no other way. God grant that we may every one of us know and feel *that* more and more ; but to depend on His Death and Sufferings, without truly and humbly turning from sin, is more the part of him who died saying, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us," than of him who said, "ⁱWe indeed" suffer "justly," but Thou, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." Alas ! to think of the fearful storm which shall sweep away every such refuge of his, when the rain shall descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and shall beat upon that house, and it shall fall, and great shall be the fall of it. But when there is both sound faith and holy obedience, *that* man both standeth and buildeth on the Rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against him.

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 41.

In order to this, we must have the constant Intercession of Him Who is the Rock. For we read that after all these great and precious promises to S. Peter, when Satan was permitted to try the Apostles, as he did holy Job, sifting them as wheat, there was need of a special prayer on the great Intercessor's part for Simon Peter. "I have prayed for *thee*," for thee especially, "that thy faith fail not." Why for Peter especially? The history seems to shew that it was, because he was in especial danger of failing. Wherefore, brethren, if at any time we find ourselves more than usually encouraged and lifted up by the merciful promises and overflowing bounty of our Lord, let us understand that then is the time to seek His gracious Intercession with unusual earnestness, that our faith fail not. And remember that the regular and appointed way of resorting to Him as our High Priest is the taking our part worthily, as being, each one of us in our measure, priests under Him, in the Blessed Sacrifice and Sacrament of His Body, which He was just then offering up, for the first time, for S. Peter and the rest.

And since S. Peter and the rest, by virtue of this great promise, are, in the Church, as foundation-stones bonded on and bonding us on to Christ the Head Corner-Stone, how should we not with fear and veneration keep our hold of them, i. e. of the Church founded on them, with its bishops, priests, and deacons, its two holy Sacraments, and its holy and divine Scriptures? since, by keeping hold of that Church, we do really keep hold of Christ Himself, Who hath promised to be with it always?

Finally, as it was no small part of the great Apos-

tle's blessing, that by him the first Jews, and by him also the first Gentiles, were to hear the word of God and believe; so let us all understand that it is our bounden duty in our several callings to do our best and pray our best, that others may be turned to God through us. There is none of us so mean, so young, so ignorant, but he may by God's help keep himself from offending, and be a light, however faint, to those among whom he is living. And He Who accepted and blessed the widow's mite will look very graciously, be sure, on those who, for the love of Him, try to do their best in such simple ways. Only let all be done for the love of Him and in dependence on Him, never with the fancy that we are any thing of ourselves: then shall we be building not on the sand but on the Rock.

SERMON XXXI.

THE CHURCH, LIKE HER LORD, A REFRESHMENT TO
WEARY SOULS.

S. PETER'S DAY.

ISA. xxxii. 2.

*"A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind,
and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water
in a dry place, as the shadow of a great Rock in
a weary land."*

You understand at once, that there is but one Person of which these words are spoken: but one Person Who could be all this to all the children of men. That one Person is Jesus Christ, of Whom the prophet had said just before, "A King shall reign in righteousness." Jesus Christ is that Man, Who alone can shelter us all from the storms of God's anger, and from the confusion and violence of this present world: Who can be our hiding-place from the wind, and our covert from the tempest. Jesus Christ, by His baptismal graces, is to us all, as rivers of water in a dry place: and while we are here in this earth, this weary land, on our hot and toilsome journey, ready, perhaps, very often to sink down and give ourselves quite up, Jesus

Christ is to us as the shadow of a great Rock, under which we may rest and refresh ourselves, and renew our strength for the rest of our hard journey.

But what Jesus Christ is, of Himself alone, as our Incarnate God and Redeemer, that, in a far lower but still in a very true way, He has given to His chosen servants to be under Him. He has made them the channels and instruments and conveyers of His graces to us. Under the King Who should reign in righteousness, there were to be princes who should rule in judgement. Under Christ, there were to be the holy Apostles, and those who should follow in their place. And to signify how their office would be in reality the same as His; how they would be nothing of themselves, but everything as a sort of shadows and representatives of Him, Holy Scripture calls them by the same names of honour as it calls Him: and among others, He Himself especially gave to the senior among His Apostles this very title of Rock, to which the prophets had, in more than one place, laid claim on His behalf. You heard it in the Gospel this morning, and in the catechising just now, how Simon son of Jonas received from our Lord Himself the title of Peter or Cephas, which means a Rock. It was our Lord's way, when His servants made dutiful confession of Him, owning Him to be what He is, and themselves entirely in His hand, it was His way, I say, at such times to make confession in turn of them: sometimes changing their name, sometimes assuring them of some great privilege: and adding perhaps to the blessing some necessary caution. As in the sixth chapter of S. John, when the same S. Peter in the name of the rest had said,

“^a Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God,” when S. Peter had said this, our Lord rewarded the pious confession by assuring the twelve, as before, that He had chosen them: “Have not I chosen you ?” and to this He added the greatest and saddest of cautions: “one of you is a devil:” one of you, brought so near Me, will fall away as the evil angels: his high place will but serve to condemn him in the end. So here, Christ being Himself *the Rock*, the great Rock, of which in the old Scripture the Jewish people had been taught so much, graciously appoints in words, S. Peter the senior of His Apostles, and in meaning all the other twelve also, to be in His place the visible rock, when He should be gone out of sight. And this His grant He accompanied with a warning. For S. Peter, not enduring to hear Christ say that He should suffer, the Lord turned, and looked earnestly upon him, and called him Satan, for wishing to interrupt his Master’s work. Our Lord being *the Rock* of the Church, S. Peter was to be *a Rock*: and so were the other Apostles: but all were put in mind of the ruin which would come upon them, if, being so entrusted, they got into the way of the world. Christ would turn them out of His sight, calling them no more by His own Name, nor by the name which He gave them, but by the name of him to whom they would have sold themselves, “^b Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things which be of God, but the things which be of men.”

^a S. John vi. 68, 69.

^b S. Matt. xvi. 23.

Still, though there were this danger of forfeiture and falling away, S. Peter was truly and really called a Rock, truly and really made a partaker of that high title of Jesus Christ. Now, how is Christ like unto a Rock, why is that title given Him in Holy Scripture? First, because He is firm, unchangeable, immortal, "the Same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." So, then, S. Peter was to be, and so, as you heard in the lesson this afternoon, he proved to be, having been thoroughly cured of the casual and sinful fear, which had caused him to deny our Saviour three times in the course of His Passion. But now he is quite firm. Christ hath prayed for him, and his faith shall fail no more: now his word to his persecutors is, "We ought to obey God rather than man" and "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." This firmness of the great Apostle, specially given him by the Holy Spirit, may very possibly be one reason, why he is called a rock or stone.

But the principal reason undoubtedly is, that our Lord was vouchsafing to make him a chief part of the foundation of His Church. So Christ Himself explained His own words. As thou hast confessed Me by the Name of Christ, so, behold, I confess thee by the name of Peter, i.e. of a Rock: "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, i.e. a rock: and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In some sense or other then the Church was to be built upon S. Peter: he was to be, in some way, part of the foundation. Now the Foundation, properly so called, Peter could not

^c Acts v. 29.^d Ib. iv. 19.^e S. Matt. xvi. 18.

be : for we know this, that "other foundation" of the Church "can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Christ is the Stone set at nought of the builders, but now made the head of the corner : "neither is there salvation in any other." Christ is the Foundation, the Corner-stone, to which the other stones must be joined, the Rock on which the whole must be firmly based ; for His own word of promise and warning is, "It fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." Upon this Rock the whole must be imbedded, and to this Foundation-Stone the whole must be joined : for they are living stones, and S. Peter says, the person of each new Christian, his soul and body, is a living stone, added to the Church of Christ ; and the life depends on their being joined to Christ their Foundation. In order that we may be all so joined, each one in his turn, and that there may be no separation, no loss of our spiritual life, that we may not become as separate stones, shaken and cast out of our place in the building, Christ has ordained His Creeds and His Sacraments : His Creeds, for us to learn and believe and meditate upon more and more all the days of our life ; and His Sacraments, to unite us really and spiritually, to make us, and keep us, by real inward sanctifying grace, members of Him, and children of His Father. And for both, the Creeds and the Sacraments, both for true doctrine and sacramental grace, His ministry, His Apostolical ministry, is ordinarily necessary. Therefore we read that He hath built His Church on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets ; not S. Peter only, though S. Peter, as first of the Apos-

¹ S. Matt. vii. 25.

ties in point of rank, is especially spoken to in the text. And again we read, that the wall of the new Jerusalem, i. e. of the Holy Catholic Church, hath twelve foundations, on which are written the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. Not the name of S. Peter only, but the names of all the twelve. S. Peter, by our Lord's favour, was named first; some one must be named first; but there is no sign at all in Scripture of his having more Apostolical authority than the rest. In one sense it is very plain that the Church was especially builded on S. Peter, namely that he was chosen among the rest, that both Jews and Gentiles by his mouth should first hear the word of the Gospel and believe. The Jews, as you know on the Day of Pentecost, in the second chapter of the Acts; the Gentiles in the case of Cornelius, in the tenth chapter. All who have since been converted, have been added on to those congregations: and in this sense, on that Rock the Church has been built.

Again, our Lord is the Rock of His Church in another and quite a different sense; as it has been explained by S. Paul to the Corinthians. Our fathers in the wilderness did "all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." That is, the children of Israel on their way from Egypt, whenever they wanted water, were miraculously supplied with it on striking a rock, and that rock was the type and shadow of our Lord Christ on the Cross, Who being smitten by the soldier's spear, and His Side pierced, there came out Blood and Water:

§ 1 Cor. x. 4.

U 2

which Blood and Water is the grace of the two Sacraments, pardon and sanctification, to cleanse and strengthen and refresh us, wherever we are on our way to heaven. In this sense our Blessed Lord is our Rock. He, the ground or Foundation on which we are built, supplies to us a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. But how can it be said that S. Peter and the other Apostles were a rock to the Church, or that the bishops and clergy, in this place, are so at this day? None of them could or can be fountains of grace. Of course not: but they might be, and are, channels of grace. They are trusted with our Lord's precious sacramental gifts: the blessing flows, as it were, through them to us. By the bishops and priests of the Church He Who was smitten on Mount Calvary continues His healing sacramental Presence with us. The spiritual Rock follows us: and that Rock is Christ. So it was in the first days of the Gospel; the Apostles having our Lord's commission, having had His Holy Spirit breathed into them by Himself, were enabled to do the same miracles that He had done; their touch was as healing, as wonder-working, as His had been. "By their hands," says S. Luke, "were many signs and wonders wrought among the people:" "inso-much that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." It was then in respect of outward bodily healing: and although miracles of that kind are no longer visibly bestowed on the Church, yet the inward and spiritual wonders, of which these were

^h Acts v. 12, 15.

pledges, are vouchsafed and renewed day by day. Our souls are cured and evil spirits cast out, by the grace of the spiritual rock following us: by the Sacraments, I mean, of Jesus Christ, which are with us wherever we are.

And whereas it is written, how anxious they were that the shadow of Peter, as he went to and fro in the streets, might fall upon some of them, expecting that it would do them much good: you may understand, how anxious good and humble Christians have ever been in all times, to put themselves at least in the way of their pastor's guidance for themselves, and for those who are near and dear to them. They could not, they cannot help being anxious for that kind of aid, knowing that the shadow of Peter is in fact the shadow of Christ, the true great Rock, giving shelter to all those, who could never find shelter for themselves, in this weary land. We may, through our Lord's gracious blessing on the grace given to His clergy, draw near to Him, and rest under His shadow, for the shadow of the Apostles is His shadow and has the same soul-quickenings virtue: if we abide faithfully under it, we shall be safe: like the Bride in the Song of Solomon, we may sit there with great delight, and His fruit shall be sweet to our taste. This blessing, Christ Present in His Sacraments, and in them giving Himself to us, is made sure to us by the presence and ministry of the Bishops and pastors of His Church: of whom S. Peter being the first, the promise made to him must be understood to be made, in more or less measure, to all.

See then, brethren, how it is; you are here, in this wicked world, full of anxiety, and misery and sin:

often and often you are quite tired with your journey, you feel the sun and the hot air, and would give a good deal to have an entire rest; well then, here is the shadow of the great Rock, the shadow of Peter, the shadow of all the Apostles, the shadow of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, under which you may refresh yourselves, and be safe. You may refresh yourselves; for it is not only a shady Rock, such as might always be found in many places in the wilderness; but it is also that living Rock, which only God's own people ever had with them in their wanderings, the living Rock, out of which living waters flow for your refreshment. And you may be safe, for He hath saidⁱ, "I will cover them with the shadow of My hand." The Rock is Christ, and the shadow of the Rock is the Holy Catholic Apostolical Church, the Church not of S. Peter only but of all the Apostles: and you are under that shadow when you come here, out of the hot air and fierce brightness of the world, to drink of the living waters as worthy communicants, or to prepare for doing so as good children or true penitents. Do you not see how it is in the large pasture-fields in hot sunshiny days? how the cattle, or deer, or sheep, gather themselves into the cool shade of any large trees that happen to be there: they make no mistake, they are not so foolish as to stay panting and athirst in the unshaded places, when the cool airy shade is within their reach. For why? an instinct from heaven teaches them. And have not we a sure teacher from heaven also, the plain words of Scripture, plainly set forth by the Holy Spirit in the Church? Surely when we look upon

ⁱ Is. li. 16.

the cattle, it may well teach us to be ashamed of ourselves, who have so long, and so often, stood wilfully in the parching dust of the world, in the cares and temptations which we know were withering up our very heart, when all the while the Church-doors were open, the great Rock, with it's healing shadow, was close at hand. We had but to confess our sins with a true heart, either in the congregation, or, if need were, to the priest in private ;—we had but to come worthily to drink of that spiritual Rock ; and all would have been well. Some of you, I am sure, know this by comfortable experience. May He help them to know it better and better, and bring to the same knowledge all, who as yet have been unable or unwilling to receive it. Some of you have certainly known the consolations of God in His holy Church, as the sick persons mentioned in the Acts knew the effect of the shadow of Peter, when it did but touch them in passing, and their diseases were driven away. Such sudden miracles we may not expect : but to the faithful, contented, patient spirit it is more than any sudden outward cure, to abide day by day, in quiet obedience under His shadow, amid the tokens of His Presence, and to feel that we are in the right place, the place where, sooner or later, all that is now amiss will be mended, and all that is in a good way will be brought to its entire perfection.

SERMON XXXII.

CHARITY QUICKENED BY REPENTANCE.

S. PETER'S DAY.

S. LUKE xxii. 32.

"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

ALL readers of the holy Gospel must have observed Christ's very particular concern for S. Peter. He was manifestly favoured, in some sense, more than the rest of the twelve. S. John, indeed, is called the disciple whom Jesus loved, and he was admitted to lie on His breast at supper. But S. Peter is always mentioned as first in dignity over the glorious company of Apostles. In our Lord's lifetime he is always named first, both of the whole twelve, and of the three who were chosen to be with Him on special occasions ; and he is several times put forward to speak for the rest, in a manner which shews that they all in some way looked up to him. Likewise, after our Lord's death, whenever the Apostles were met together, except it were on that one occasion at Jerusalem, when S. James presided as bishop of the place, the first room was given to S. Peter. It seems

his place to stand up and propose matters for the rest to consider; or again, to speak in the name of the rest, when any thing was to be said for them all, to the Jews, to their rulers, or to particular persons; for instance, to Ananias and Sapphira.

But there are two occasions before our Lord's death, on which He seems more particularly to have shewn His great love for this favoured Apostle, and to speak of him in a way, which would cause all who desire to enter into the mind of Christ, to think very much of S. Peter. One was, when upon S. Peter's solemnly owning Him Son of God, He said to him, "Thou art a rock, and on this rock," that is "on thee, joined to Me by this faith, I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This seems to shew, that on S. Peter, as first of the Apostles and prophets of the New Testament, a great deal would depend; the Church was in some way to be builded upon him: and it seems also to shew, that the Evil one might be expected to make some great effort to overturn S. Peter, and shake his faith: against which fearful time our Lord gives the most comfortable assurance, that the gates of hell can never, in the end, prevail against His Church. Let Peter, and with him the body of bishops and pastors, of whom he is in some sense chief, let them continue, as they will continue, in the true faith of Christ the Son of God, and the powers of darkness shall never get the better of the kingdom of heaven. It may, in some respects, degenerate and decay: but it will not be overthrown, for it is founded upon a rock.

The other time, when our Lord's care and love of

S. Peter was especially shewn before His death, was on the very night of His Agony : when, as He Himself told His Apostles, "Satan desired to have them that he might sift them as wheat." The Evil one knew, how much depended on the Apostles, and on S. Peter in particular ; he knew it by the remarkable promise which we have just been considering : and therefore, as in the case of Job, so also in their case, he sought to have power given him against them for a time, to see if he could by any means make them fall away from Christ. This is what our Lord calls "sifting them as wheat," trying them, if he could by any means find out which of them were good corn, and which were chaff. This, Satan was about to do by the afflictions which came upon our Lord, and He, knowing their weakness, prepares them for it. He prepares S. Peter in particular, by telling him that He had prayed for him in particular. What could be a greater token of the merciful love and care of our heavenly Advocate, than such an earnest and special intercession ? One reason of it might be, the high place among His Apostles, which He intended S. Peter should hold : another, His knowing that the great Apostle's zeal and affection would before long lead him into danger beyond the others. Our Lord foresaw, that when they all forsook Him and fled, S. Peter, with S. John, would speedily turn back, and follow Him to the high priest's palace, which would put him into great danger : as we know it did, for he denied three times that he had any thing to do with our Lord. Christ therefore, in His great mercy, prayed beforehand for S. Peter, that whatever words of unbelief

he might utter in the hurry of that night's alarm, yet his faith might not fail : and we know it did not fail : for the moment our Saviour turned and looked upon him, he repented from the bottom of his heart, and went out, and wept bitterly. And Christ, soon after His Resurrection, in token of His entire forgiveness, promised him the honour of suffering for His sake, and committed to him three times, over and over, the especial care of the lambs and sheep of His flock.

And as the very thing which led him into temptation was his too daring, but earnest and loyal affection for our Lord, so, after he had recovered, he made good those other words of his Master : "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." His thankfulness for his own narrow escape was to be shewn by his charitable care to strengthen in every way the hands of his fellow-disciples, and make them hold fast by the Rock, on which he himself leaned. Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, he strengthens them ; first, by proposing to elect another in Judas's place ; next, by declaring to the whole multitude the meaning of the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ : whereby He laid the foundation of the Church, which thenceforth began to be built up upon him and the other Apostles. Then he strengthened all their hands by the great miracles which God gave him power to do ; healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, and striking down Ananias and Sapphira with a word ; nay, and even by his very shadow (for so we are given to understand) healing the sick as he passed by. Afterwards he goes down to Samaria, on purpose to confirm

or strengthen the new-baptized there : which is the first mention of Confirmation, in the history of the Church. And then what strength and courage did our Saviour add to the whole Church by S. Peter, in that He called him by a holy Angel to be first to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and to baptize Cornelius and his household : as also afterwards, by delivering him from prison, again through the ministry of an Angel ; and by that witness which he bore at Jerusalem, when the Apostles and elders were assembled in council, against the first corrupters of the Church !

Thus, wherever we find S. Peter mentioned in the Acts, he is employed in “strengthening the brethren,” and when we read his two epistles, we find them remarkably answering the same description. The very word, “confirm,” or “strengthen,” appears to have dwelt upon his mind, from his manner of using it more than once. The whole, indeed, of his first epistle, is taken up with strengthening his brethren against persecution ; and of the second, against false and corrupt doctrine. And so he went on to the end. He who was of himself as a reed shaken with the wind, by his union with Christ, and the commission he received from Him, came to be an unshaken rock, on which the unstable but well-meaning might lay hold, and find great support in time of need.

Thus was S. Peter the chosen type and sample of the aid, which Christ has provided for us all, by ordaining regularly bishops and pastors in His Church. They are His special provision for strengthening the brethren ; and if, in spite of this gracious care of

His, the brethren still continue weak and unstable, whose fault can it be, but either the pastors' own, for being in some way unfaithful to their trust, or else the people's, for refusing obediently to hear and follow them?

Considering more particularly the words of the text, they seem to caution us especially against a certain way of thinking, which goes as far, perhaps, as any other, in making void Christ's good purpose in the ordinance of the Christian ministry, discouraging very sadly both pastors and people. The feeling I mean is, that when God's ministers are known to have done amiss, or to be chargeable with some particular imperfection in their office; presently, the devil is at hand to suggest that it is vain, perhaps presumptuous, for such as they are, to labour in so holy a calling. When this thought arises in a pastor's own heart, it makes him idle, and listless in his duty; when in the heart of any flock, it no less certainly makes them disrespectful and undutiful. The right way, of course, is to encourage it, so far as it makes us humble, but to overcome it, when it would check us in our plain duty. For instance, if any of our former sins, of which we have truly repented, comes strongly before our conscience, we ought not to let it hinder us from setting about any good duty; but it should be brought before God, in prayer that He would make us very humble, circumspect, and serious in our way of performing that duty.

And as to the people, the infirmity of their pastors or of any others in authority over them, should cause them not to despise, but to pray for them.

In both cases, the example of S. Peter, if we would recollect it, might do much good. See, what our Lord says to him; "Thou art on the point of a sad fall; but when thou hast been raised up again, strengthen thy brethren." S. Peter, then, if after his repentance he had drawn back from holy offices, under the notion of being unworthy, would not have done according to Christ's will: and if the people had rejected or scorned him for the same cause, they would have been resisting Christ's ordinance. He was neither to be slothful, and omit warning others, because the remembrance of his own three denials of Christ hung heavy at his heart; nor were they to taunt him with it, or say, This man preaches faith, yet he denied his Master in danger.

We see at once how utterly unsuitable and wrong such feelings as these would have been in S. Peter's case. Let us depend on it, the like feelings cannot be very right, cannot well please Christ, in the case of any other bishop or pastor, and the people committed to his charge. It never can be right, either in pastors or in any other Christians, to become negligent of their duty in time to come, because they are uneasy at the thought of wrong conduct in times past. Rather let us say to ourselves, "If so great exertion was necessary for a holy man, like S. Peter, after he had been betrayed into one sin, of which, however, he bitterly and for ever repented at the first call from his Master; how anxious, how unwearied, how self-denying, ought we to be, who have sinned, perhaps repeatedly and wilfully, after grace so much greater than S. Peter's, inasmuch as he was not yet in the kingdom of heaven, as we have been ever

since our Baptism ! And we, most likely, needed to be called many and many times before we would repent ; whereas the holy S. Peter, at one look from his Master, remembered himself, and returned to his better mind !

“ At least, let us be diligent in our repentance, now that we have in some sort repented : let us be as active in good works, as ever we have been in sins : that we may not forfeit His grace and mercy, Who only can make atonement for us : and that we may shew ourselves truly thankful to Him for so great goodness, in that He not only redeemed us at first, but also still allows us a chance of recovery, after our doing so much, to cast away His bounty from us,”

And among other fruits of repentance, it becomes us to be very earnest, as S. Peter was, in warning and guarding our brethren, as God gives us opportunity, against the special sin, be it what it may, to which we have been unhappily too much inclined ourselves. Only let us beware that this our care be truly charitable ; that we do not seek to be praised or approved, nor to make ourselves out, in any manner, worthy and good sort of men. Let us check our high thoughts, and the pleasure we are apt to find in being praised, with the recollection of those faults of our own, which we know, and God knows, but which we should least wish for man to know. Let that remembrance hang heavy on our hearts, and prevent us from ever again feeling gay and delighted, when our brethren praise us : as it is said of S. Peter, that through all his after-life, great and good and holy as he was, and mighty as were his works wrought

in Christ's Name for His Church, he never could hear the cock crow without weeping: that sound had more power to distress him, than the praise of all the Churches had to exalt him. Thus did he acknowledge his fault, and his sin was ever before him.

So whereinsoever any Christian has fallen, and has been by God's grace raised up, let him always bear in mind, how near he has been to the worst of evils; how he had brought himself into the most dangerous condition, from which nothing but the intercession of Christ could save him. Let him be ashamed that he did not repent sooner, and that when he did, it was in such poor and scanty measure. Let him assure himself that the Evil one, from whose snares he has in part recovered, is watching him day and night, more eager, if possible, to overthrow him again, than he was to tempt him to his former sin.

We have all need of God's forgiveness: great, unspeakable need of it. Let us not forget that our chance of it depends, in great measure, on our doing our best for our brethren.

Remember the saying of a holy Apostle: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

^a S. James v. 19, 20.

SERMON XXXIII.

PROFIT AND HOME FORSAKEN FOR CHRIST.

S. JAMES'S DAY.

S. MATT. iv. 21, 22.

“And He called them: and they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him.”

THE collect for the day points out to us, as usual with our Church on Saints' days, a part of S. James's example for our particular imitation. We pray that as “he, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient unto the calling of Christ, and followed Him, so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow His holy commandments.”

Thus our thoughts are carried back to the time, when it seemed good to the Son of God, in His Divine foresight, to call four fishermen from their work on the shore of the sea of Galilee to be His Apostles, and chief foundations of His Church. “Follow Me,” He said, first to S. Peter and S. Andrew, “and I will make you fishers of men.” “They drew their nets to land, forsook all, and followed Him.” Presently after, going a little further, He saw their

partners also, "James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and He called them: and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him."

Now, although both these pairs of holy brethren, S. Peter and S. Andrew first, and afterwards S. James and S. John, were called by our Saviour at one time, from one employment, and both alike followed Him without delay; yet the history, when narrowly considered, seems to signify certain differences between those who were first and those who were afterwards called; between S. Peter's case and S. James's; differences, which are not unimportant to be considered by us.

It would appear as if Zebedee and his sons were what the world calls "better off" than Simon and Andrew, the sons of Jonah. For of these latter, when our Lord finally summoned them, it is only said, that "when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him:" but of James and John, that "they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and followed after Jesus."

They had then a father alive; and, as the history shews afterwards, a mother. For Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children, was one of those who waited on our Lord in Galilee. To her care the Blessed Virgin was intrusted by our Lord Himself, when He said on the Cross to her son, "Behold thy mother." And on the morning of the Resurrection, she was one of the women who came early to the sepulchre with sweet spices, to do honour to our Lord's Body.

Both the father, then, and the mother of S. James were living at the time of our Saviour's call to him : but we have no reason to think the same of S. Peter. We know that he had been married, and that his wife and her mother were perhaps living, but we have no mention of his parents in the New Testament : and it seems that they were both dead, before the time that he was summoned to leave his home.

Again, the mention of "the hired servants," would make it appear that Zebedee, S. James's father, was in a somewhat easier and more plentiful condition of life than S. Peter and S. Andrew were. And this agrees with what we read of S. John, S. James' brother, being known to the High-Priest, so that he ventured after Jesus into the palace of the High-Priest, when all the other disciples were afraid to follow Him there.

S. James then, in common with his brother S. John, had this above many others to render his obedience to our Lord's call particularly acceptable ; that he gave up the society of his parents to do so. He might have enjoyed, as other people of his rank did, a comfortable home, and a respectable place in the world. But he left all this to follow One Who had not where to lay His Head ; Who was called a Samaritan, a deceiver, and said to have dealings with the devil.

And S. James did this at once. He did not stand waiting and considering, but courageously obeyed the first invitation, to join himself to our most Holy Saviour. He and his younger brother, S. John, *immediately* "left the ship and their father, and followed after Jesus."

S. James, then, may be regarded as affording an example and encouragement to those who follow Christ, in two sorts of trials more particularly: those which arise from a thriving condition in the world, and those which attend, sometimes, on a quiet and comfortable home. To obey our Lord's call, he left "both the ship and his father:" both the business to which he had been brought up, and on which he might depend, if not for wealth, at least for a comfortable maintenance; and the consolation of being with his parents, and living peaceably at home with them.

And for this, his double self-denial, how greatly was he rewarded! Our Lord received him to be not only a disciple, but an Apostle; and not only an Apostle, but one out of three whom He particularly favoured above the other Apostles, keeping them near Him on the highest and holiest occasions, when the rest were bade remain at the threshold, so to speak, of His glories. S. Peter, S. James, and S. John were alone with Him, when He raised Jairus's daughter, and restored her to her afflicted parents: alone with Him in the holy Mount, when He was transfigured, and had Moses and Elias talking with Him: alone (except S. Andrew) with Him, when He uttered those awful prophecies concerning the end of the world: alone with Him, finally, when He submitted Himself to His Agony in the garden, and "His sweat was, as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and there appeared unto Him an Angel from heaven strengthening Him." S. James, in each case, is the second namely of the highly-favoured ones, whom He chose among living men, to be His witnesses on these solemn occasions.

Again, S. James was the very first of the Apostolic college to follow his Lord in martyrdom. When "Herod stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the Church, he killed James the brother of John with the sword." Up to that time, the number of the holy twelve, restored in S. Matthias after Judas's sad fall, had continued complete: but now it seemed good to our Saviour to grant to this faithful Apostle the crown of all His favours, the honour of dying for Him. And thus he tasted, according to his own prayer, of the cup which our Lord drank of, and was baptized with the baptism, that He had been baptized withal.

It might seem almost sinful presumption, for such as we are, to take to ourselves, as if intended for our pattern, the example of so great and holy a saint, one brought so very near the Person of our Divine Saviour Himself. But we know it is not presumption, since even Christ's own example, and that of the Eternal Father, are set before us for our study and imitation. We are bid to do to one another as Christ did to His disciples; and to "be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." Much less then must we shrink from contemplating the pattern of any saint or Apostle, how holy and glorious soever, as one which we ought to copy; since we shall surely be judged by all such patterns, once made known to us by God's providence, in His Holy Scriptures or His Church. They will be reckoned among the talents, which will burthen and sink us into earth at the last day, if we be found to have neglected the due improvement of them now.

Does any man ask how he can imitate S. James,

he, a private Christian, not called to be an Apostle, not summoned by the providence of God to any one great sacrifice, which might gather, as it were, into one the self-denials of a whole life? Let such an one think this within himself, that there may be, there probably are, occasions, in which his worldly business, whatever it be, is apt to interfere more or less with his duty to our Saviour. The memory and fancy of his shop, his plough, his garden, or his loom, mingles unseasonably with his prayers and holy readings, and tries to hinder him from attending to our Saviour's voice, inwardly whispering, "Follow Me." Well, on all such occasions, let us manfully put aside the intruding thought, saying, as Felix did, but with a better meaning, "Go thy way now; and come again when I shall have a convenient season."

It may be, that by such constant and resolute attendance on his prayers, determined neither to miss them, nor to go through them with his mind elsewhere, a Christian may seem, as if he should be more or less a loser in this present world. So much the more let him keep to his purpose. It will indeed be a blessing, should God give him some little share of the reward of those who suffer in earnest, be it little or much, in His Name.

But let us suppose his trial of another kind. Suppose it comes, not from worldly gain, but from worldly peace and quiet, and home satisfactions. Doubtless a quiet and affectionate home is one of the greatest blessings that a man can imagine in this world; yet even this may sometimes prove a mischief. "A man's foes," as our Lord said, may sometimes "be of his own household." As our Lord's

own brethren came out to take hold on Him, and prevent His preaching, saying, "He is beside Himself:" so it is very easy to imagine how, in ten thousand ways, affectionate, but worldly-minded fathers, and brethren, and friends, and husbands, and wives, may check one another in their duties, especially in the self-denying parts of Christian holiness; how, with the kindest feelings, they may be always striving to put us wrong. Their example too often speaks aloud, and says, "Surely you need practise no kind of severity or strictness." Their instructions not seldom take us the same way. They cannot bear to see people denying themselves, and make a point of interrupting them, by every kind of earnest remonstrance, and expression of feeling: much as S. Peter did, when he took and rebuked our Saviour, saying, "a Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee."

Certainly I should imagine, that from one friend or another, most of us must have met before now with objections to holy obedience, not altogether unlike this: which is as if it had pleased Zebedee, when he heard Christ call his sons, to argue against the call, and say, "He could not yet so well spare them: it was too much to ask of them quite entirely to give up their old employment: for a time, and in some measure, they might come, but he could not willingly permit them to give up all."

Now we see what S. James and S. John would have done, had their father Zebedee made objections like these, as so many people do now, to their children's wholly following Christ and His Church.

^a S. Matt. xvi. 22.

With all dutiful respect to their father on earth, they would still have given him to understand, that they looked to their Father in heaven above all: and when He called them, not even a father's wish could hinder them from saying, "Here am I." We read not, that Zebedee made any opposition to his sons' joining Christ; but if he had, this, we know, must have been the tenour of their answer: according to their Lord's declaration afterwards, "^b If any man come after Me, and hate not his father and mother," if he be not prepared to give them up rather than Christ, and so practise what the world will call, "hating them," "he cannot be My disciple." And in a like spirit, no doubt, should every Christian make answer, when tempted by parent or near friend, directly or indirectly, to break any of Christ's plain commandments, or to live in contempt of the holy ordinances of His Church.

Persons who, in sincerity and truth, make sacrifices of this kind; who really prefer, not their own fancy, but Christ's will, even to family comfort, may find great encouragement in the favour which our Lord shewed to His holy Apostle, S. James. Their prayers for light and strength, they have every reason to hope, will be bountifully answered; Christ will make Himself peculiarly present to them, in all His works, both of mercy, of wonder, and of judgement. Whether He raise the dead, or shew Himself in agony or in glory, or come to judge Jerusalem, those who have made great sacrifices for Him will be His favoured and honoured witnesses.

But let them beware of one thing, which also the

^b S. Luke xiv. 26.

after-history of S. James points out, and that is, presuming on Christ's favour. Those two much beloved brethren, the "sons of Thunder," rejoicing as they did in their special nearness to Him, were anxious to have it continued for ever, and that in preference to all others. He rebuked them so far, as that He would not suffer them to dream of obtaining a high place by any partiality of His. The humblest person, He said, would have it, whosoever that person might be: and He turned their ambition, rather, to the thought of trials to be endured for His sake. "Ye shall drink indeed, of My cup, and be baptized with My Baptism: but to sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give."

God give us grace, my Christian brethren, to practise such a mind as this: not to value ourselves on any little sacrifices, which He in His mercy may give us an opportunity of making for Him: but still to look forward to the unknown hour, when we shall have to drink of His cup, to die as He hath died before us! With that hour full on our mind, may we cheerfully pass by whatever stands in our way, and being called by Christ, give ourselves up *forthwith* to fulfil His holy commandments!

SERMON XXXIV.

THE PARTING OF BRETHREN.

S. JAMES'S DAY.

ACTS xii. 1, 2.

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.”

S. JAMES and S. JOHN were brethren, both sons of Zebedee, both employed in fishing on the lake of Galilee. They do not seem to have been of Bethsaida, the same village as S. Peter and S. Andrew, but either to have belonged to Capernaum, or to some other town very near it. Also of their father Zebedee we read that he had hired servants with him in his boat, which may make it appear that he was not quite so poor as Jonah the father of S. Andrew and S. Peter, for we read not of their having any servants. However, the two families, S. Peter's and Zebedee's, were in partnership; they had been fishing together when our Lord joined them, called them to be His Apostles, and confirmed His call by that miraculous draught of fishes. S. James, as well as S. John, answered that call immediately. “They left

their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants; they forsook all, and followed " Christ. If they gave up more than some others, in order to be with our Lord, He for His part treated them with more than ordinary grace and favour. He invited them, S. James and S. John together, S. Peter only being equally honoured, to be present at some of His most awful doings and sufferings, as at the raising of Jairus' daughter, the Transfiguration, the Agony in the Garden. And although our Redeemer on the Cross recommended His holy Mother to the care of S. John in particular, yet S. James had so far his share of the trust, in that he was at that time living, with his brother and his mother Salome in Jerusalem, in that home, to which the beloved disciple conducted the Blessed Virgin from the foot of the Cross. They were also together with some other disciples, when our Lord appeared to them after His Resurrection, when the miracle of the draught of fishes was repeated on the sea of Galilee, perhaps nearly in the same place as before.

In all these instances these two holy brothers were together, as well as in our Lord's call to be of the number of the Apostles, in the gift of the Holy Ghost, and in other favours and honours, which the whole twelve had in common. Being then so entirely united in their lives, it seems remarkable that they should have been so completely divided as they were in their deaths. For S. James was the first martyred of all the Apostles: S. John survived them all, not coming to martyrdom at all. S. James, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, was slain with the sword by Herod not so very long after our Saviour's Ascen-

sion : S. John, having escaped by miracle from the boiling oil into which he had been cast by one of the Roman tyrants, lived to be very old and helpless, and died at last quietly at the age of more than one hundred.

We may well imagine, how painful and trying this separation must have been to S. John ; to lose his only brother out of his sight, at the very time when he seemed most to need him ; both for God's cause, and for his own health and comfort. Yet how common a case is it ! Of two brothers, sisters or friends, who seem specially to need each other, how often does it please God to take one away, as to flesh and blood it may seem, very untimely ! But it may well console a person under so severe a trial, to recollect that their lot was the lot of the beloved disciple of our Lord. What right have we to complain, should providence see fit to deprive us of some one most dear and necessary to us, and cause us, so far, to go on our way mourning and forlorn, seeing that with that very affliction He saw fit to visit one so dear to Him ; the friend who lay on His own Bosom, and to whose charge He committed His Mother. S. John's brother was taken out of his sight, taken from him and from the Church of God on earth, at the very time when he might seem to be most wanted, when the comfort and help of his presence would be most grievously missed. So it is often : persons on whom we depend, most dear and precious to us, are cut off in the midst of their days, and we left to go on mourning without them. Great lights pass away from the Church, just at the time when their departure might seem to leave us in most dangerous darkness. May

we so live, as not to draw upon ourselves any such grievous trial by any wilful sin or profaneness of ours! For we know that oftentimes the sins of Christians are visited in that way. For this cause, because we are profane, many are weak and sickly among us, and many sleep. Who knows how many of the untimely deaths, which we see happen, may be owing to some sin or carelessness in the friends or parents of those who are so taken away? God forbid that we should so draw any such trouble on ourselves! But if not for our sins, yet for our trial, we must sometimes expect to part from some of our very dearest and best friends, some of those whom we most depend on to guide us; and it may help us in such a case to think of the holy Church of God and especially of the beloved disciple S. John, how they had so early to part from S. James, a person so honoured, and so dear to them. We may think how the saints felt, when the first martyrdom took place among the Apostles. Doubtless it was a deep and sore trial to them: it was in some small measure a revival of the sufferings of Christ: but as, when Christ departed, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, so, when the first of His chosen friends was taken away, they rejoiced also. They considered that, although out of sight they knew not how much good he might do them: they felt sure that he still prayed for them, and if the earnest prayer of a good man here availeth much, how much more the prayers of those who have departed and are so much nearer Christ! Again they must have felt more and more determined to follow S. James's glorious example, in continuing to give up all for Christ. It must have come home to their

minds more than ever, what a sin and shame it would be, were any of them now to fall away, and be frightened or tempted into renouncing Christ's Name. Let us too endeavour to be so minded, whensoever it shall please God to take away from us parents or elder brethren or friends to whom we look up, as He now took S. James from the Church. Let us trust and hope that they still pray for us, and let that encourage us to do our very best in praying, as we ought for ourselves and for all others. Let us above all things remember their good example, remember what pain and horror, if pain could be in heaven, it would give their pure and affectionate souls, to see us falling away into the doings which God and they abhor: and let us keep ourselves pure accordingly!

SERMON XXXV.

SERVITUDE, THE BADGE OF CHRISTIAN DIGNITY.

S. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY,

S. LUKE xxii. 27.

"I am among you as He that serveth."

IF we go into a house where there are a master and servants, we are generally at no loss to distinguish the one from the other. He that sitteth at meat is the master ; he that ministers and waits on him is the servant. There cannot well be any mistake : we know them at once one from another. The servants wait, and the master is waited upon. The family could not go on in any order, if it were otherwise. But in the heavenly household, the family of Jesus Christ, the Holy Catholic Church, it is just the contrary. There, the Master waits, and the servants are waited upon. The good things of the world to come, the word of God and the grace of His holy Sacraments, are ministered to us by Jesus Christ : we do not minister them to Him. He washes and feeds us, not we Him. In a word, He makes Himself our servant : and if we could see things as God sees them, we should be as thoroughly aware of this as we are

aware, on going into a family, who is the master, the chief person, and who are they that serve and wait in the house. If our eyes were but opened to see things as the Angels see them, we should discern how wonderfully He Who created us abides among us even now, to provide for all the wants of our souls: as He Himself told His disciples in the text, "I am among you as He that serveth." In the world, he that sitteth at meat is greater, but it is not so among you, your King and your God has made Himself, for your sake, "least of all and servant of all."

Thus our Lord spake to His Apostles at His last Supper: and they would understand Him all the better, and what He said would sink the deeper into their hearts, in consequence of what He had just before done. For at the beginning of this feast, He had, very solemnly and earnestly, in their sight performed the office, which slaves were wont to perform to their masters coming in to their meals, especially from a journey. He had washed their feet, each one of them, not leaving out even Judas the traitor. And in order to do this, He had made the usual difference in His dress, ^agirding Himself with a towel, which He used to wipe their feet. And when they were amazed at this, He told them plainly that He did it for their sake. He did it, because He was their Master and Lord; in order to set them an example. Thus He had done to them, and this He had told them, at the beginning of that Paschal feast which He kept with them the night before His Sufferings. And now He refers to it again, on occasion of the dispute

^a S. John xiii. 5, and 13, 14.

which arose among them at that feast, which of them was accounted to be the greatest. He corrects and warns them, that greatness in His kingdom should be a very different thing from greatness in a worldly way. He, the King and Lord in His kingdom, had just shewed Himself by washing their feet to be among them as the servant of all: and they were to understand that the nearer any came to the King, the higher place any should have in His kingdom, the more would that man have to humble himself, and wait on every one, as Christ Himself did. Our Lord's words are to be taken as explaining what He had done. His disciples had not rightly understood it, otherwise they would not have begun again, so soon, to dispute which should be greatest. But now He has made it so plain, that there is no excuse for our not understanding it. He has made it plain to all generations, that as He was and is among us, to wait upon all, and to be servant of all, so are His ministers and His whole Church to continue doing unto the end of the world. In proportion as any man or order of men comes nearer to Christ; in proportion as any generation or any part of the Church has Christ more entirely abiding in it; just in that same proportion and measure will they humble themselves to wait each one upon his brethren; each will make himself last of all, and servant of all.

Perhaps it is a part of this humiliation, that so little is known, generally, of the sayings and doings of the holy Apostles; their wise words, and their mighty and wonderful works. If they had cared to do so, they might, no doubt, have said and done things to make themselves specially remembered, as the great

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ones of this world do. But, no doubt, they wished for nothing of the kind. Their wish and their prayer was, to do their duty and please God: not that men should either then or in after time say, "This was the doing of such and such a saint." And in this respect again they were like faithful and good servants; on whom almost every thing depends, as concerning the order and beauty of the house; but the persons who come, and go, and admire the house, know nothing of the servants, neither do they care to be known; their object is, to satisfy their master and mistress, and do right by them. And so it has come to pass, that of the greater part of the Apostles, of all but four or five of them, we know very little indeed, except that they were Apostles, and faithful ones. So it is with the saint of this day, S. Bartholomew. We should naturally wish to know a great deal more of him. But it has pleased God to hide it from us. And we may be sure that, whatever good we might have gained from knowing more particulars of his holy works and ways, nothing could have done us more good than quietly following the pattern which he and his holy brethren have set us; doing our work faithfully in God's household, without seeking to be praised or known for it: and being, in this respect as in others, servants and ministers, not masters and rulers, in the Church.

Our Lord made Himself servant of all, first in His wonderful Incarnation. As S. Paul writes, "^b being in the Form of God," i.e. being from all eternity God, even as the Father is God, one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, He "made Himself of no reputation,

^b Phil. ii. 6, 7.

and took on Him the form of a servant." He took on Him, not only the outward appearance, but the very true nature of man, who by wilful sinning had become the slave or servant of sin. Again, "^cbeing rich," Owner of heaven and earth and of all things therein, He for our sakes made Himself "poor;" gave it all up; was as though He had nothing of His own, not even where to lay His Head. In this respect again, He took on Him the form of a slave; was, among men, as He that serveth.

And thirdly, and very especially, Christ was among men as He that serveth, by His constant waiting on others in His miraculous goodness. From the beginning of His life to the beginning of His Ministry, He abode with His poor and lowly parents, and was subject unto them, and wrought in the carpenter's trade. And from the beginning of His Ministry to the end of His earthly life, He went about doing good. He was continually doing something for others, never for Himself. When they came crowding round Him to be cured of their diseases, or to have their souls relieved and comforted, or the evil spirits driven away from them, they were so restless, so many, so importunate, that they sometimes left Him "^dno leisure, so much as to eat." Did He therefore draw back from them? Did He hide Himself from the poor petitioners, as He did some time from His subtle malicious adversaries? Nay, He had full compassion on them, He healed their sick, He instructed their ignorance, and then, rather than send them away fasting, He wrought a miracle to feed them, lest they should faint by the way.

^c 2 Cor. viii. 9.

^d S. Mark vi. 31.

Thus our Lord was among His people as He that serveth, all His life long; that which was pronounced as a curse upon undutiful *Canaan, He took, as He did the whole curse of sin, upon Himself. "A servant of servants" He was unto His brethren. So it was in His life; so and much more in His Death. For this very reason did He choose the death of the Cross, and dispose all things by His providence, so as to bring on Himself that particular way of death; because it was the punishment specially reserved for slaves, and He would be in all things a slave for us. What He did then in washing their feet was not a single thing done once for all, as if a great king should, once in his life, humble himself to wait on his own servants, but it was a true token and sample of the whole course of His life.

Now the Apostles were to be like Him: He gave them herein especially an example, that they should do as He had done unto them. And so they did: as their Acts and epistles shew. As they preached not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, so they behaved themselves, day and night, as the servants of all Christians for Jesus' sake. They esteemed nothing their own, but were ready to spend, and be spent: not even depending for a return on the love and gratitude of those, for whom they gave up all. They worked on just the same, though it should happen sometimes, that the more abundantly they loved their flocks, the less they were loved by their flocks. They made themselves poor, and suffered the loss of all things, if by any means they might win souls. They were content, as the Apostle of this day, to work in

* Gen. ix. 25.

secret. As good servants, their joy and crown was, for the house to be in good order, not for themselves to be praised on account of its being so. They were always waiting upon all who came in their way: doing what good they might to their bodies, that they might be the more enabled to do good to their souls.

Now such as the Apostles were, such as our Lord was Himself upon earth, such did He intend His Church to be in His place: His Church, and each particular member of it. And although, through our manifold sins and wickedness, things are sadly fallen away from what He intended they should be, and from what they were at first; still a thoughtful person may see, that this is on the whole the mark and character of the Church, and certainly of each good Christian in it:—to wait upon all, to be in the world as one that serveth. For, was not the Church waiting upon us from the very first, as soon as ever we were born into the world? Was she not ready, as it were, by our very cradles, to take us up and put us in our Saviour's arms? And was she not ready afterwards, with her schools and instructions, to train us up in the way, wherein we should go? to lead us in due time to the Bishop and present us for his blessing? and after that, to bring us to God's holy Altar, where, if it is not our own fault, we are sure to be fed and nourished unto everlasting life by the precious Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ? When we are sick in body or in soul, is not the Church always ready to attend us with the best of comfort and instruction? In the greatest blessings of life, in marriage and childbirth, is not the Church with us to give thanks, and obtain for us a manifold blessing?

and in the greatest sorrows, in the death of dearest friends, in our own death, is not the Church still at hand, to sanctify our troubles, and to lay us gently down in the same gracious Arms, in which she placed us at our Baptism? Yes indeed, brethren, from beginning to end, we are waited upon, cared for, nursed and cherished by the Holy Church, the Sister and Spouse of Christ. She never forsakes us; she grudges us no trouble: no tenderness. Why? Because she knows what His will is, Who graciously vouchsafes to call her Sister and Spouse: she knows that He has chosen and called and strengthened her, to follow His steps, to be among men as one that serveth. The Church may be ill-used; slighted, scorned, robbed, persecuted by the governors of a country, by the whole people, or the greater part, by this or that person; but it still goes on waiting upon all.

We, my brethren, are the children of Christ and of the Church: He has given us of His Spirit, to make us His own, for that purpose, that as He is, so should we be in this world. We are the children of the Church, and members of Christ: and children ought to be like their parents, therefore we too, each one of us, ought to be among men as he that serveth; that is, Christ expects of us, that we should be evermore waiting on each other. The Apostle's word is, "By love serve one another:" do not account anything your own, your time, your money, your strength, your cleverness, or any good gift besides, wherewith God has favoured you: do not esteem it your own, to do what you please with it, but consider always, that it is your Divine Master's, and that He has trusted you with it for the good of your

[†] Gal. v. 13.

fellow-servants. Another Apostle's word is, "¶ Be courteous:" that is, whatever company you are in, be always watchful and attentive to do as you would be done by, in little things and in great. Contrive beforehand to be as kind, and to make yourself as useful, as ever you can. You know, when you are in company, how you like yourself to be treated; you do not like to be laughed to scorn, rudely thwarted, or passed over: it is pleasant to you to see that people care for you, and attend in a good-natured way to your innocent wants and wishes: well then, you know at once, how *you* ought to behave to others: how respectful you ought to be to elders, or other superiors, how gentle and considerate to inferiors, how true and yielding to equals. Endeavour to be all this, which you know you ought to be, and which you wish others to be towards you: endeavour, I say, to *be* courteous, not to seem so. There is great danger of our practising these amiable manners, more or less, for the love or fear of men, and because we mind what they will say of us. Take care, do not depend, do not value yourself on, such courtesy as this: it will be like alms given in public, it will obtain you no reward of your Father which is in heaven. But this is the courtesy, these are the charitable works, which will really and truly please God, and profit your soul: when you shew kindness just the same, whether it is likely to be known and praised, or no: when you make no partial or capricious difference between one man and another, but are helpful, friendly, respectful, obliging, to *all*, quite all, in their degree; when, as in almsgiving, you rather hide than shew, from whom your kind and

¶ 1 S. Pet. iii. 8.

well-meant doings come; when you look after the pleasure and profit of those whom you do not like, as well as of those to whom you are partial. All these will be good signs that your courtesy, your attention in ordinary things, as well as any effort you make on a greater occasion, is really Christian and charitable, and for Christ's sake; not put on for the fancy of the moment, to please yourself, or any one else but God. Remember, He Who made Himself servant to all, and bid us do the same, He was courteous and kind to all, even to those who, at the moment, He knew were treating Him most cruelly and falsely. When Judas drew near to Him, to betray Him, He said only, "^h Friend, wherefore art thou come?" This within a very few hours, perhaps a very few minutes, of His saying those words to His disciples, "I am among you as He that serveth." It may be, that within a very few hours, perhaps a very few minutes of our hearing the holy lesson which those words have taught us to-day, we may be tried by some very ill behaviour of somebody, or may be called upon to perform some irksome task of charity, to which at the time we may not be at all inclined. Then let us remember Him, and for His sake keep our tongue from cross and angry words, and our mind from peevish discontented thoughts: and forgive, and do good, and wait on one another with all our hearts: and when we have done all we can for one fellow-Christian, let us not leave off, but presently look out for another, for whom we may do as much, and then for another, and so on to the end. "ⁱ Blessed is that servant, whom His Lord when He cometh shall find so doing."

^h S. Matt. xxvi. 50.ⁱ Ib. xxiv. 46.

SERMON XXXVI.

ANGELS WAITING ON THE CHURCH.

S. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.

S. JOHN i. 51.

“ Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see heaven open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

It does not seem certain, whether or no S. Bartholomew, whose memory we honour this day with thanksgiving to God, was or was not the same with Nathanael, that Israelite without guile, whom our Lord so graciously received on his first approach to Him. Whether they were two persons or one, is a matter, on which those who know most of Christian antiquity hardly seem to have made up their minds.

However, it is clear that the promise, addressed by our Lord to Nathanael, is well suited to our consideration on any Apostle's day, and especially when the Church, as to-day by her Epistle, calls our attention more particularly to the marvellous tokens of God's presence, which S. Bartholomew, in common with the other Apostles, received. “ By their hands were many signs and wonders wrought among the

people: insomuch that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them ^a:" God giving such grace to those His first chosen witnesses, as He afterwards did to S. Paul: when "from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them ^b." The touch of S. Paul's garments, the shadow of S. Peter's body, had such healing virtue, as before their time had been given to the hem of our Lord's garment; and in both instances the cause and spring of the healing power was the same; namely, the Touch of Jesus Christ. "Virtue went out of Him," which not only healed, but gave power to heal: like the kind of stone which we have all seen or heard of, which not only draws iron to itself, but causes whatsoever iron it touches to have the same power of attracting other iron.

This power, I say, of working miracles, in consequence of the touch of the Body of Jesus Christ, is probably part, at least, of the meaning of the promise which our Lord made to Nathanael and Philip in the text. "Hereafter shall ye see heaven open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." It will, therefore, be not out of season, if I endeavour to shew, first, how this was fulfilled in those very times; then, in what sense we may understand it, as still receiving fulfilment in our times; and lastly, what use it becomes us to make of so wondrous and merciful a communication.

First, then, in this promise to Nathanael and the

^a Acts v. 12, 15.

^b Ib. xix. 12.

rest, there is a clear allusion to the history of the patriarch Jacob; of whom we read in the book of Genesis, that when he was on his way from his father's house, "he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the Angels of God ascending and descending upon it: and, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed: and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Such was the vision of our father Jacob; in which we cannot well doubt that God prophetically shewed him, in the first place, His special providence over the Jewish people, the Angels coming and going, as we know they did, on God's special messages to them: next, and chiefly, He shewed him the same Angels, employed in the higher office of waiting on Him Who, either in His own Person, or in His Church, is the true Substance whereof Israel was but the shadow.

Our Lord, it will be observed, had just called Nathanael an Israelite; "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;" and by that name He had recalled the memory of the great patriarch Jacob, of whom it had

° Gen. xxviii. 12—15.

been especially written, that he was "a plain," that is, a guileless man. So that when Christ afterwards made mention of the "Angels ascending and descending," it would not be hard for considerate persons to understand, that in effect He was saying thus: "Now is the time coming, that you will see Jacob's vision fulfilled; a new and blessed intercourse is going to begin between heaven and earth; the stairs are let down which must join the eternal world to this; Almighty God is ready, at the top of them, to send His Angels on His thousand errands of mercy, to His Son, Incarnate and abiding among men for man's sake. And this scene of wonders will begin immediately, and will never cease while the Son of Man continues, in any sense, on earth. 'The way into the holiest of all will now be made manifest;' heaven will be opened, and never shut again; and the blessed inhabitants will be continually passing to and fro between it and earth: and you shall see it; you with all saints shall be witnesses by faith of these things."

Such is the prophecy; and it is easy to see how it was accomplished, in the first instance, and in our Lord's abode on earth. The blessed spirits who had announced His birth, who watched His infancy, who waited on Him after His temptation, as they appeared to Him also in His Agony, and kept guard around His grave on the morning of His Resurrection, and stood by (apparently), when He ascended into heaven: so we are not to doubt that they waited on Him, though unseen, in all His mighty and merciful works. We see that the very day after this promise was made to Nathanael, the first miracle took place; the

water at the marriage in Cana was changed into wine; upon which S. John emphatically observes, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him." As if he had said, "Thus our Lord began to shew that glory which He had told His disciples of: and they, seeing His words so punctually accomplished, believed on Him."

By thus supposing that the coming and going of the Angels refers especially to our Lord's miracles, we shall be able to explain the word "hereafter," which He uses at the beginning of this prophecy. It means properly, "from this time forward:" leading them to expect that quite immediately that manifestation of the new state of things would begin. Angels had been coming and going long before, but now they were to see with their eyes visible tokens of the awful intercourse; and that without delay; and not once or twice only, but as a continued gift of God for a long time. All which we see to have been exactly accomplished, if we suppose the Angels to have been invisibly our Lord's ministers in working His miracles, as we have much reason to believe that they are in carrying on His ordinary government of the world, and in keeping up what we commonly call the course of nature. We read in Scripture of the Angel of the waters, of Angels whom the Almighty uses as spirits or winds, of ministers whom He sends forth as flaming fire; and well may we suppose such Angels to have been at work, obeying the will and commands of their Lord in changing the water into wine, in strengthening the palsied, opening the eyes of the blind, cleansing the lepers, and the many other

signs, by which our Lord, the Creator of the world, shewed Himself Lord over the things that He made.

One occasion we know there was, in which He employed an Angel for cure, namely, at the pool of Bethesda, when, after the troubling of the water by one of those invisible messengers, "whosoever stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." One instance we read of also, wherein He employed the evil angels to work His will, sending them into the herd of swine; whereby it seems to be rendered the more probable, that He might, in like manner, employ the good Angels when He was performing miracles of mercy; and that the ordering and changing of such things as health and sickness, sight and blindness, and in general of things natural, in obedience to His will, might be part, at least, of what was meant by their ascending and descending upon Him.

Thus we see how the prophecy of the Angels coming and going in men's sight was fulfilled in our Lord's own time: but the words of it are by no means limited to that time. Our Lord's expression is, "hereafter;" namely, "from this time forward;" as though He were speaking of a state of things, which would begin presently and never have an end. It is the same word as He employed to the chief priests, when adjured to declare whether He were the Christ or no. "I am," He said; "and hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven:" as much as to say, that His humiliation was now quite over, and that from henceforth all we should see or hear of Him would be so many tokens or pledges of His new

and glorious condition. As the word "hereafter," in that case, means all time after our Lord's trial, even to the end of the world, so in the text it may mean all time after this conversation with Nathanael; not limited, in words at least, whatever it might be by meaning, to His mighty miracles done in His own time.

If this be so, we ought to be able to point out some sense, in which the Son of Man might be said to abide on earth, and was considered in the prophecies as so doing, when, in fact, He was gone away into heaven. Neither is this hard to find out. Christ (in the language of Scripture) is so completely one with His Church; we are so completely one with Him; He is so touched by the burthen of our innocent infirmities; and is so joined to us by the communion of saints, so present in us by His Holy Spirit, our Comforter, that we may well apply to the Church the prophecies which speak of Jesus Christ; and among the rest, that which says, Angels of God should ascend and descend upon it. If Angels had to do with miracles, surely they ascended and descended on the members of Christ, as they had before on Christ Himself; for we have seen what signs and wonders the Apostles wrought by the Name of the Holy Child, and by the power of His Spirit.

But how are we to carry on the meaning of the promise, to the times, after which miracles are supposed to have ended? to our own times, for example, in which, as it should seem, all the powers of nature are going on regularly: they "continue as they were even from the beginning of the creation." How can it be said, that we even now may see the Angels

ascending and descending on Christ our Lord? It may be said in this way: We and all Christians are members of Christ; the Church, which is His Body, composed of us all, is in a certain sense Christ Himself; and although there are no miracles, properly so called, striking our senses, there are certain wonderful works, which Christ carries on in the Church by certain of His creatures; of which works, according to all that has been said, we may well enough imagine the Lord of all to have been speaking, when He talked of Angels, to ascend and descend upon Himself. What are those works? They are the means of grace, prayer and the holy ordinances of the Church, and most especially the two most blessed Sacraments, Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. In each of these, certain things natural, certain of what we call the powers of nature, are employed: and we have seen that Almighty God in His Scriptures, speaking of what He works in that way, teaches us often to think that it is done by Angels. So that this promise of Angels going to and fro, may be accomplished, partly at least, in the intercourse which God keeps up with Christ's members on earth, through the means of grace before mentioned.

Consider, first among them, the case of prayer. I do not mean the secret occasional prayer of the heart, concerning which, as of all other private thoughts, it is written, "^dThou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men:" but I mean such regular devotion, both outward and inward, as our Lord directed in His Sermon on the Mount; "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father

^d 1 Kings viii. 39.

which is in secret : ” or such as the psalmist invites us to, saying, “O come, let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.” This regular devotion, both of soul and body, the Angels can take notice of, and therefore we may well believe, according to the hints of Holy Scripture and the constant opinion of the early Church, that they take part in it; even as one of them was seen in a vision by S. John, offering incense in a golden censer^b, “with the prayers of all saints,” upon the golden altar which was before the Throne. Therefore we may well believe that solemn prayer, especially public Church prayer, is one of the occasions on which that is fulfilled to us, which our Lord promised to His disciples. “Heaven” is then “opened” and we may see by faith “the Angels of God ascending and descending” upon the members of Christ here below.

Hear the words of a venerable writer of our Church^c: “Between the throne of God in heaven and His Church upon earth here militant, if it be so, that Angels have their continual intercourse, where shall we find the same more verified, than in these two ghostly exercises, the one Doctrine, the other Prayer? For what is the assembling of the Church to learn, but the receiving of Angels descending from above? What, to pray, but the sending of Angels upward?” We see, indeed, no miracles, nothing at least which the world would call miracles; but when we see Christians assembled together, in the Name of Christ, and by His Apostles’ authority, offering the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, we see what certifies us of heaven being opened, as positively as the first

^b Rev. viii. 3.^c Hooker, Eccl. Pol. v. c. 23.

disciples were assured of it by the change of water into wine, and the rest of our Lord's mighty works. There He continues the miracles which He began in Cana: there He manifests forth His glory: let us, His disciples, believe on Him.

And if Angels are present, and signs and wonders are wrought, in the ordinary assemblies of the holy Church, well may we believe the like grace to attend on the rest of her visible rites and ordinances. When Bishops, who are themselves called Angels in the New Testament, lay their hands on the baptized, imparting to them the strengthening Spirit: or, on those who are called to be pastors, bidding them "Receive the Holy Ghost," for some high office and work in His Church: or when they enter into a newly-built Church, and bless and hallow it with prayer, in the Name of our Lord: we dare not doubt, that in all these cases, true, though unseen, Angels are present; true, though unseen, communion goes on, between the Most High God on the top of the heavenly stairs, and His Israel waiting by faith here below; true, though unseen, miracles are wrought, if we hinder them not by our unbelief and unworthiness. For is it not a true though unseen miracle, for the laying on of a man's hand to be followed by the strengthening Spirit; or by such a change in the person on whom it is laid, as shall make him a true successor of the Apostles, and convey down to him the power and virtue of their ministry? Is it not a true though unseen miracle, for an ordinary building to be changed, by the prayer of a Bishop, into a place where the glory of God dwells, as it dwelt in the temple of Jerusalem?

And if this be so in the other sacred rites and ordinances of the holy Catholic Church, much more surely in those two, which are the necessary foundation of all, being the appointed means for the participation of Christ Himself, by virtue of which participation alone can we be sharers in these or in any other blessings. I mean the two divine Sacraments, of Holy Baptism, and the Supper or Communion of our Lord.

As to the peculiar presence of Angels, in the Baptism of children especially ; we know what our Lord intimated, that such have Angels of their own in heaven, who always behold His Father's face ; Angels of a high and glorious order, which are yet in some sense those children's own : and if they are their own, they minister unto them : and if they minister unto them, who can doubt that they do so especially in the moment of their Baptism, when they are being made members of Christ, brought out of darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ? Baptism, therefore, is one of the chiefest occasions on which children, and such as children, may be sure of that presence of Angels ascending and descending, which our Lord promised to His Church through Philip and Nathanael : and, to be sure, no miracle can be greater, if we have faith to take Scripture at its word, than what is wrought in Holy Baptism. It was wonderful enough that a man should be cleansed of his leprosy by washing in the river Jordan ; but it is nothing, absolutely nothing, to the Holy Ghost by water working the new-birth of a Christian ; making him, who was born in sin, and the moment before a child of wrath, to become a member of

Christ, clothed with His righteousness; a child of God and of heavenly grace.

There is this difference, that the change was seen in Naaman's case, in Holy Baptism it is not seen. But it is the very province and power of faith, to do away with this difference, to make us see the things which are invisible. It is nothing but want of considerate, lively faith, which prevents us from feeling, whenever we are present at a Baptism, as if we had lived in our Lord's time, and seen with our own eyes one of His greatest miracles.

Lastly, if Holy Baptism, then no doubt the Holy Communion of Christ's Body and Blood, is another and a chief instance of our seeing "heaven opened; and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The Son of God Incarnate is with us, in that mystery, in a manner wherein He is not with us in any other holy service. The Angels, therefore, as the Church always believed, are there especially, joining in our prayers and praises. Indeed, S. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, may be well thought to tell us so in express words. He says, "^dAre they not all ministering spirits?" where the word "ministering" is the very same, which was used in those times to denote the solemn Liturgy, or service of the Communion; and his manner of asking the question, "*Are they not* all such?" would seem as if he were not teaching a new truth, but reminding the Christians, to whom he wrote, of a doctrine and saying well-known among them; a doctrine acknowledged also in our Communion service, as often as we profess to sing our hymn of glory, "with Angels and

^d Heb. i. 14.

Archangels, and with all the company of heaven.” Doubt not, therefore, nor fear earnestly to believe, that in the Holy Eucharist also Angels are present, and miracles continually wrought: for what can be a greater miracle, than that the consecrated Bread and Wine should be, to the faithful receiver^o, Christ’s Body and Blood? or that the blessing, pronounced by our Lord at the beginning, should be continued, down through His Apostles and Bishops, and the priests appointed by them, and so descend, at the present day, on the bread which they break, and the cup which they bless, in His Name? These, if they be truths at all, are great and fearful truths: and no corruption or irreverence of others should keep us from bowing the knees of our hearts, and humbly acknowledging such an awful Presence of our Lord, any more than we should be kept from worshipping the true God, because, if we lived in India or Africa, we should see others worshipping idols.

These things will not have been considered in vain, if they give any help to any of us, in contemplating the times of the first Christians, as being, in fact, our times; the miracles, then wrought openly, as pledges of the unseen, but no less miraculous, working of God with us, in His Church and Sacraments. So may we, by God’s grace, understand a little of our exceeding blindness and danger, as many as go

• I add, for fear of unauthorised inferences, that this is no other than the language of the old Roman Missal: “*Quam oblationem tu, Deus, in omnibus, quæsumus, benedictam, adscriptam, ratam, rationabilem, acceptabilemque facere digneris, ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiat dilectissimi Filii tui Domini Dei nostri Jesu Christi.*” (Assem. codex Liturg. iv. 159, 160.) The “*Dei*” is omitted in the modern Roman Missal. *Ib.*

on wilfully in sin and imperfection, although we know that heaven is still open, and the powers thereof ascending and descending upon us. Rather may we all awake, with our father Jacob, and say to ourselves night and day, “‘Surely the Lord is here, and we knew it not.” Let us be afraid, and say, “How dreadful is this place,” this kingdom of heaven, this holy Catholic Church, of which God has made us members: “this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

‘ Gen. xxviii. 17.

SERMON XXXVII.

HOW TO MAKE MUCH OF A LITTLE.

S. MATTHEW'S DAY.

Ps. xxxvii. 16.

"A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked."

THE Apostle S. Matthew, was employed in collecting the taxes for the Roman emperor ; a gainful business, and reckoned even sure, in those days, to make men's fortunes who practised it ; when our Blessed Lord, passing by, said only two words to him, "Follow Me : and he left all, rose up, and followed Him." He well knew what he was doing ; giving up all that he had in this world, in order to take part with One Who had no home, no place, where He could make sure to lay His head. Why ? Because S. Matthew had full faith in what Almighty God teaches concerning the true value of things. He felt quite sure and certain, that it was better to have ever so little, in common with Him Who is truly called "the Righteous Man," than to have the greatest estate of the richest man in the world, or all the estates of all rich men put together. The smallest thing that Christ

had to give, was more precious to him than all the wealth of the world; and therefore he at once gave it up, and would have given it up, had it been a thousand times more, in order to be admitted into Christ's company.

Now this, for aught we know, might be in S. Matthew no more, at the time, than a strong sort of instinct or feeling, that whatever else might be right or wrong, it must be right, and safe, and good, to obey all the commands of the Holy Person Who was then speaking to him; to follow Him, and to give up all for His sake. He might have been watching Christ beforehand, and wishing secretly to be favoured with such a command; and Christ may have spoken to him, knowing what was in his heart. Or the call may have been altogether sudden: like the call of David from the sheepfolds, when he least thought of it, to be king over Israel. In any case, there is no reason to think that S. Matthew stood at all in doubt, balancing with himself, what could be said for and against his following our Lord's invitation. He came as soon as ever he was called. He "made haste, and prolonged not the time, to keep the commandment." He took Christ's service, as it were, upon trial, like Abraham, not knowing whither he went. He felt, though perhaps he could not have proved, that Christ was that Righteous One, with Whom a very little is better than the riches of all the publicans and great men in the world.

He felt this at first, and when he had really joined himself to Christ, no doubt every day and hour proved to him more and more that he had been in the right,

* Ps. cxix. 60.

that he had chosen the wise and safe course. He experienced, how very far the least drop of earthly consolation and enjoyment would go, when a man was continually with the Holy Jesus, seeing Him and hearing His Voice.

So shall it be, even now, whenever a person closes heartily, at more or less cost of earthly goods, with the directions of Jesus Christ, distinctly declared to us by His Church. It may be mere good feeling, the warmth of his heart, at first; he may not be able to give any reason for it in words; but let him go on, accompanying Christ and the Church in the practice of the like self-denying obedience, and there will be something he cannot mistake, which will tell him secretly, that so far as he acts thus, just so far he is in the right way; that an hour or a minute of devout prayer, or laborious charity to Christ's little ones, is worth a whole life of such pleasures as the world can give; and that even in sufferings, borne humbly and sincerely for His sake, there is a drop of sweetness which makes the whole draught palatable, however bitter and intolerable it may be in itself.

As we, this day, keep the memory of S. Matthew's deep trust in our Saviour, it will not be unsuitable to call to mind some instances of this Divine power, given by the Almighty to true faith and devotion of heart: that it takes up, nourishes and cherishes, whatever is good and comfortable in our condition: makes the most of it: spreads, enlarges, ripens it, as the sun in spring time does the little flowers, which would otherwise quite wither away. While, on the other hand, there is in the love of the world, in all kinds of covetousness, a blighting, withering

quality, which gradually causes the most abundant growth of prosperity to shrivel and contract and shrink into nothing. "A small thing that the righteous hath, is better than great riches of the ungodly:" the largest store that the ungodly hath, is less than the least possession of the righteous.

See, for instance, in any poor cottage, where true devotion and honest industry abide, how far even very scanty wages will go towards providing the real comforts of life. It is not only that Christian patience makes them content with a little, but somehow or another, Christian prudence teaches them to make the most of that little, so that it seems to grow in their hands, and to reach further in the way of making them comfortable, than any one would have thought possible. In this, no doubt, is a secret blessing from God: but we may in part see the manner of it: we can understand, at any rate, how true religion, by making men contented, keeps them in sound hearty courage, to set about any thing which they see to be prudent and good for their families. They lose no time in complaining, languor, and idleness, but whatever their hand finds to do, they do it with all their might.

Nor is it less surprising, on the other hand, to see how irreligious ways wear out and destroy, no one knows how, if not the riches themselves of worldly men, at least all the enjoyment and pleasure that might be looked for in them. How often do we hear of great fortunes dissipated unexpectedly, and nothing, people say, to shew for it all! How continually are the very richest in embarrassment, if they spend their wealth in a mere worldly way! It goes before

they are aware, and they become poor, without any such blessing as is promised to those, who make themselves poor for Christ's sake.

This becomes still plainer, when we come down to more particulars; to the things wherein people are supposed particularly to enjoy their wealth. “^b Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.” Who would not rather be S. John in the wilderness, with the leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat locusts and wild honey, than such a wealthy king as Herod, “^c making a feast to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee?” In the one case, every morsel is sweetened by the thought of God's blessing, and the comfortable hope of His approbation; in the other, the very object is to drive away all sorts of serious remembrance. *This* enjoyment cannot bear being thought of: *that*, the more you think on it, the higher it rises; for if it be really a token of God's love, no thought can come up to it. And thus one may readily imagine, how a very little circumstance in a good man's life may grow upon him, and cause him more happy thought, even in this world, than the greatest prosperity of a bad man.

It is the same in the matter of health and strength. A saint on a sick bed, Hezekiah turning his face to the wall and praying, shall do more, shall really exert more power to change the face of the world, than a mighty conqueror, such as Sennacherib, at the head of his army. Such an one will make the most of every little interval of comparative ease; it will be a matter of conscience to him to do so; and

^b Prov. xv. 17.

^c S. Mark vi. 21.

his minutes will often go further for the good he seeks to do, than other men's hours for their purpose, whatever it be.

Take another instance. One chief supposed advantage of wealth is, that it enables men to choose their company, and to abound in all social enjoyment; but one sure friend that the righteous hath, is worth all the companions of the ungodly. Elijah in the wilderness, with now and then a visit from an Angel: did he not find that the remembrance of those rare moments cast a light over all his long solitary hours, which quite prevented them from being tedious? Did he ever wish himself, think you, in Ahab's place, with his many friends and allies, and his seventy children?

Nay, and the same rule holds, not only in respect of outward things, but of knowledge also, and scholarship, and acquaintance even with divine matters. Solomon, at one time of his life, found by very sad experience, that "d in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow;" and S. Paul "e determined to know nothing" among the Corinthians, "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified:" that knowledge, which the poorest among us all may have, if he will quietly bear his lot for Christ's sake; it is not even necessary that he should know how to read.

Thus a little drop of knowledge, touched by divine grace, may swell into the sea: as the wise son of Sirach describes God's dealings with himself: "f I came out," he says, "as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden: I said, I will water my

^d Eccles. i. 18.

^e 1 Cor. ii. 2.

^f Eccclus. xxiv. 30.

best garden, and will water abundantly my garden-bed : and lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea." Because he applied himself to his immediate and nearest duty with all his heart, God blessed him with large and high knowledge, beyond all the ungodly wisdom of the world. Thus that one little point, knowing what is next to be done and resolutely doing it, will tell as much in the way of knowledge, as the widow's mite, duly offered, in the way of riches.

Finally : such is God's mercy on the one hand, and the perverseness of men on the other, that, even in respect of spiritual blessings also, the psalmist's saying holds true, "A small thing that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." A little measure of grace well employed, and received into a heart willing to be made righteous, is better, far better, than the highest spiritual privileges, when God, in His unsearchable judgements, has vouchsafed them to unworthy persons. This is like our Saviour's saying, "s Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness." And again, "h The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." And of the ten lepers who were cleansed together, one only "i returned to give glory to God," and "he was a Samaritan."

Here is comfort for those, who seem to be placed in less favourable circumstances than others ; less within reach of the means of grace ; farther from

s S. Matt. viii. 11. h Ib. xxi. 31. i S. Luke xvii. 18.

Churches, or with rarer opportunities of receiving the holy Sacraments. I do not deny that their loss is great: yet our Lord not doubtfully gives us to understand, that it may be made up, though they themselves know not how, by increased and most earnest prayers and endeavours on their part. They may be like the woman of Canaan, who, although she was in the place of the dogs, yet was allowed a portion of the children's bread, because of her great faith, her persevering and humble prayer.

So then, those who are afraid because of their ignorance, provided such ignorance be not their own fault; persons also in sickness, or old age, unable to attend Church-services, and others in like case, may be sure they have not to deal with a hard Master. Their one talent, if they will apply themselves in earnest, may be so laid out as to obtain the reward of him that had five talents.

And whereas in all this there seem to be great advantages offered to those, who in the world's judgement would appear worst off; it may be well, just to observe, in conclusion, that these rare blessings are held out to the rich also, if they will but reach forth their hands to take them. By fasting, and leading strict lives, they may make their bodily refreshments profit them as much, for comfort in this world, and grace in the kingdom of heaven, as those of the patient and contented poor. When God visits them with loss of friends, or with sickness, or with any of the thousand trials to which the children of Adam are exposed, they will do well to consider, that, so far, they are put in the condition of the poor,

or rather nearer to it, and therefore in a better place for making their portion in His kingdom sure.

And so in all respects, it will be found in the end, that there is but one distinction really worth caring for, the distinction between those who serve God, and those who serve Him not. Of all who try in earnest to serve Him, whatever their condition, the saying is clear: “^kThe rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all.” They meet in the Church here, and they shall meet before the Throne bye and bye, in virtue of their unspeakable union in Him Who is their Maker and Redeemer.

^k Prov. xxii. 2.

SERMON XXXVIII.

OUR LORD'S CONDESCENDING KINDNESS TO PENITENTS.

S. MATTHEW'S DAY.

S. Matt. ix. 10

"It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples."

SEE here the extreme condescension and tender love of Jesus Christ, for the worst and most miserable sinners. The holy evangelist S. Matthew seems himself astonished at the remembrance of it. *Behold*, says he; as if it were something wonderful, something more than could be looked for, even from Christ's unspeakable mercy: that He should sit at meat in a publican's and sinner's house, and that many of the like sort should be permitted to come and sit down with Him. Such, no doubt, had been S. Matthew's feeling at the time: and such it continued, so long afterwards, twenty or thirty years perhaps, when he came to write it down in his Gospel. For he, S. Matthew's own self, was the person to whom this great thing happened. He had been, a little before,

called suddenly by Jesus Christ, when sitting at his ordinary work. Like a rich merchant, a lawyer, or a shop-keeper, who has many various accounts to settle; whose time is taken up, from morning till night, with calls of business which he is forced to attend to: all of them, more or less, turning his thoughts towards money, as if the gain, or the loss of *it* were the great business of life: such was Matthew, as he sat at the receipt of custom: and if you would wonder to see such an one rise up suddenly at the call of some holy man, leave his accounts, his treasures, and his gainful employments, and devote himself entirely to the more immediate service of God, you may in some measure judge, with what adoring love and thankfulness the great Apostle and Evangelist would remember the moment of his call: all the loving looks, gracious words, and merciful condescensions of his God and Saviour towards him.

We know how Abraham rejoiced, when he had entertained Angels unawares: but here is the God and Creator of the Angels coming to sit down to meat in the house of one, whom He had not long before called out of the dangerous ways of the wicked heathen world. For the publicans, or Roman tax-gatherers, were not only wicked persons, generally speaking, but even positive heathens; and S. Matthew, though a Jew, must have been, by his calling, brought into frequent companionship with such. How then must he have been transported and overpowered, what a bowing down of heaven to earth must it have appeared to him, when the Holy Jesus vouchsafed to enter under his roof: to sit at meat there, where so often profane and wicked persons had been, indulging in

A a

profane and wicked discourse : and not only so, but as the publicans and sinners, one by one, entered in, and took their places at the same board with the Holy and Divine Visitor: how must the saint's heart have been filled with the thought of the same mercy offered to each of them, whereof he had himself so happily partaken ! What joy to him to hope, that by inviting them to meet our Lord, he might do something, under God, unworthy as he was, towards changing their hearts, and saving their souls ! And then what an enduring inexhaustible comfort, to perceive that his Redeemer's purpose was, not only to call sinners once for all, but to abide with them, after He had called them: to be their Helper as well as their Converter: to abide with them not only in Church-services, and where they appear before Him solemnly as penitents, but also in all the ordinary concerns of life, in their business and refreshment, their meals and conversations.

This, my brethren, is the point of view, in which I propose to-day to consider the call of the blessed Apostle and Evangelist, and the circumstances of the feast which shortly followed it. May we not rightly and profitably regard the whole history as a token of Christ's gracious Presence with true penitents, as well in all their common employments and diversions, as when they are actually on their knees before Him, or suffering under His rod ?

It is an awful, surely, as well as a comfortable thought, even for a forgiven sinner, to find himself in the immediate Presence of Almighty God. When we have been lying prostrate before Him, confessing our secret and open sins, and humbly waiting for

such tokens of pardon and consolation as it may please Him to grant us: when, by His especial grace and favour, the world out of sight has been made more than usually present to us: when we have been carried up to heaven, and down again to the deep, with the sense of His heavenly encouragement, and our own miserable deficiencies: we may well feel afraid and ashamed to return to our ordinary feelings and employments, and mix ourselves up with earthly matters, as if nothing particular had happened. And yet, so it must be: it is the condition under which we live, part of our task and burthen in this present world: the corruptible body must press down the soul and the earthly tabernacle; the cloud of temporal anxieties must weigh down the spirit, that museth of many and high things. Here then the remembrance comes in of our Lord's most loving and compassionate behaviour to penitents, such as S. Matthew and his friends on earth: how He not only accepted their penitency, their high and severe sacrifice of themselves, when He called them, and they, by a mighty effort left all, rose up and followed Him: but also continued with them in their after-life, through all ordinary times and occasions, when there was nothing uncommon to excite them. Levi made Him a great feast in his own house, his farewell-feast, on giving up his property: and there came many publicans and sinners, and sat down with Jesus and His disciples: and He did in no wise withdraw Himself, but abode with them in their innocent refreshment. They were not all the time actually engaged in holy services, in prayer and confession: they were taken up, as others might be, more or less, in pro-

viding for their bodily wants: still our Lord abode with them. He was at hand, as long as, by wilful relapsing or stubbornness, they did not drive Him away. He was at hand to cherish in them every faint beginning of good: to breath over their household and familiar thoughts a deeper meaning, a spirit of warning and exhortation: to reprove those who would discourage them by pride or censoriousness, to convince and remind them, in every way, that He came not to call righteous persons, but sinners to repentance. They were not to shrink from Him, though they knew themselves to be sinners, seeing He was come on purpose to call them: yet they were still to remember that He was calling them to repentance.

And now, see how all this applies to the ordinary sort amongst ourselves, to all whom Christ has called, or is daily calling to repentance. Suppose one swallowed up, like Levi, in some gainful business, or living on from day to day just according to the pleasure of the moment. He hears Christ speaking to him: his heart is deeply smitten by the call to forsake all, and follow his Saviour: he cannot be easy without seeking for a better happiness than any which his past life promises him. What is he to do? How is he to make the most of the merciful invitation of his good and gracious Saviour?

First and chiefly, let him once for all forsake, not only the sin, whatever it be, which most effectually separates him from Jesus Christ, but also everything which, he knows, will give occasion to that sin, or put him in great danger of it. S. Matthew not only forsook all covetous desires and inordinate love of

riches, but he likewise gave up at once the business of a publican, which was continually tempting him to that bad mind. He left his office or counting-house, called here "the receipt of custom," his papers and bills of accompt, his heaps of money, and all the matters, which had hitherto taken up his whole attention; he parted with all of them entirely, he turned his whole mind and heart, his eyes and his hands, quite another way. The very place which he had been used to, he forsook. To continue there would have been continuing in the way of temptation. Our Saviour expressly bade him do so: but He no less clearly, though not in express words, instructs every one of us to give up our profits, our pleasures, and our acquaintances, when we know in our hearts, that it will be dangerous for us to keep them.

Again, as Levi, being converted, made our Lord a great feast in his own house, so if we would continue our repentance, and make it perfect, we must order our houses and our meals so, that Jesus Christ may vouchsafe to be there present. Great and unspeakable as that honour is, far above what a sinner might have dared reckon upon, we are yet encouraged to hope for it. Christ, at Whose feet we have tried to cast ourselves, either in His Church, or in our private devotions, by deep and sincere acts of special repentance—He offers to return with us from the Church to our own homes, or from our silent communings with Him in our chamber to the company and conversation of others. He will sit down with us, even among publicans and sinners, if our duty call us into such company. Nay, He will the

rather accompany us thither, if we, out of charity and religion, invite such as we may, to meet Him. S. Matthew, being once called, could not endure to enjoy the blessings of his calling himself alone, but invited many publicans and sinners, his former associates in heathenism and covetousness, to be now sharers with him in the love and bounty of the Holy Jesus. And in proportion as we have truly repented ourselves, we shall of course, silently and humbly, yet really, do our best to bring others, especially the partners of our sin, to like repentance and amendment. Knowing in our hearts, how utterly unworthy we are to sit at meat with Jesus Christ, yet humbly acknowledging His merciful invitation to us, we shall never despair of any the worst sinner, never judge his case hopeless, never think it useless to pray for him, and to watch for all opportunities of doing him good, which may be put in our way by the Lover of his soul and ours. We shall try to be always on our guard against that miserable pride, which made the Pharisees cry out, “^a Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” We shall abhor the notion of grudging our fellow-creatures and fellow-sinners that mercy, without which, we know, ourselves must infallibly have perished. If sacrifice, i.e. God's outward and visible service, come in the way of mercy, i.e. truly helping our brethren, and doing them good, we shall know which to prefer. He hath said, “^b I will have mercy and not sacrifice;” therefore true love to Him will always prevail upon us to give up even the joy we feel in personally serving Him; we shall willingly give up for the

^a S. Matt. ix. 11.^b Ib. 13.

time even our devotions, rather than fail to wait upon any distressed member of Christ, who really wants our aid.

He that walks faithfully by these rules, forsaking, at his Saviour's call, not only sin but the occasions of sin: anxiously forwarding other men's repentance, in such ways as God's providence may enable him; delighting most of all in devotion, but preferring charity even to it: he shall find this great reward, that Christ will fill his heart more and more with loyal love for Himself and sense of His presence. Christ will reveal Himself to that man, as He revealed Himself to the blessed S. Matthew, enabling him to know more than others of His glorious and merciful life here on earth, of His sermons and conversations, His miracles of power and mercy. S. Matthew, at Christ's call, forsook all and followed Him: welcomed Him to his house: was charitably anxious to introduce his brethren and friends to Him: and, for his reward, he became the first evangelist: the writer of the first of the four Gospels: to him was especially committed the charge of making known the kingdom of God and of Christ. As that kingdom especially belongs to those who are poor in spirit, so Matthew, who, of all the Apostles, did most particularly make himself poor for Christ's sake, had commission to write that Gospel, in which that kingdom is most particularly set forth. For you will find, on comparison, that S. Matthew speaks of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of Christ, and the like, and that he sets forth Christ as a King, oftener and more plainly and in a greater variety of ways, than either of the other

Gospels: and this is supposed to be the reason, why his Gospel is represented in visions among the cherubim by the lion, the royal animal; viz. that it makes known Christ as a royal Person; "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." For which cause also his Gospel is particularly addressed to the Jews, to whom the kingdom had been promised by the prophets. We cannot suppose that there was no remarkable meaning in one being chosen before all the rest, so to proclaim the great King. It was as if some mighty monarch, first entering into a place, should call out of the multitude around him some one person, whom no one thought of before, to do the work of a herald, declaring his glory: and as if people should find, on enquiry, that he chose that one on account of his being ready and forward to deny and humble himself, and make himself poor. So Levi the son of Alphæus left all and followed Christ: and Christ made him steward of the riches of His grace: Christ entrusted him before others with the Gospel of His kingdom, to make known to His own people.

In conclusion, we may learn by our Lord's dealings with S. Matthew, not only how to repent, but also how to deal with others repenting. A feeling will sometimes come up even in a well-disposed mind, in spite of ourselves a feeling will arise, as if such persons were being too highly favoured: we are inclined to grudge them the high privileges of the Gospel. Let us beware of this; for too often it is part of the leaven of the Pharisees, it comes of our having too good an opinion of ourselves. Let us quiet every such thought with the remembrance of our own sad and shameful backslidings. Let us

seriously consider, that to indulge any prejudice against any repenting sinner, as though he were too easily forgiven, is in fact grudging ourselves the salvation which we hope for. For how do we expect and hope to be saved? Is it not in the character of repenting sinners? And if we think scorn of their hope, what becomes of our own?

Instead then of grudging and envious emotions, when we behold persons, whom we know to have been wicked, apparently repenting, and in consequence absolved and admitted to Holy Communion, let us endeavour to have nothing in our hearts, but sincere love for them, and prayer that they may go on and prosper. Let their earnestness put us to shame for being so dull and languid as we too often are: let their rapid improvement stir us up to a holy jealousy, and quicken us day by day in the good path; that we, with the holy S. Matthew, and all true Gospel penitents, may be admitted, though in far lower places, to sit at meat with Jesus and His disciples in the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON XXXIX.

ANGELICAL ORDER AND OBEDIENCE.

S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

REV. vii. 11.

*“And all the Angels stood round about the elders,
and the four beasts.”*

THESE words represent to us in vision, that which the Church's collect for Michaelmas-day teaches as matter of express doctrine: the wonderful order, in which the everlasting God has constituted the services of Angels and men. In His glorious and heavenly household all beings know their place, and all but sinful beings exactly keep it: even as the Angels are here shewn to the eyes of the beloved disciple, standing in the court and around the throne of the most high and everlasting King, exactly in the order which He had set. They are around His Throne, and around His Church gathered from mankind, which seems to be represented by the four beasts and the elders. They wait upon Him and, for His sake, upon His Church: not one is wanting, not one out of his station: every one is exactly where

he ought to be, and does just what the Almighty would have him do.

The same vision was present, as appears, in spirit, to one of those whom we look up to, as to bright and burning lights in our own Church of England, the venerable Richard Hooker, when drawing near his end. The day after he had received the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the last time, a friend, calling on him, found him deep in thought; and being asked the subject of his meditations, he replied, "That he was meditating the number and nature of Angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which, peace could not be in heaven; and oh that it might be so on earth ^a!"

Such were that holy man's thoughts of the kingdom of rest and glory, to which he was so fast drawing near: and all that we read of the holy Angels seems intended, in like manner, to make us think of their perfect obedience and order. They have each their own place and station assigned, in managing the works of God, or in waiting on His Church. Thus we read of the Angels of certain elements. One, having power over fire, and an Angel of the waters, are mentioned in the book of Revelations; and so are certain other Angels, whose care was to stand at the four corners of the earth, and hold the four winds of heaven, that they might not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until the time that God had appointed ^b.

Again, the book of Daniel seems to tell us of Angels belonging to particular countries; of a prince of Persia and a prince of Grecia, and of Michael the

^a Walton's Life of Hooker.

^b Rev. xiv. 18; xvi. 5; vii. 1.

great prince, who stands up for the children of God's people^c; and our blessed Saviour Himself gives it as a reason, why we should be very careful to avoid giving cause of sin to any of His little ones, that "in heaven their Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven^d." "Their Angels," He says; as if each Christian had an Angel, if we may so speak, of his own; a guardian Angel, especially commissioned to look after him, and help him in the way of salvation. So the Church has very generally believed: and we read, accordingly, in to-day's lesson, that when S. Peter, having been delivered from prison, knocked unexpectedly at the door of a house, where his friends were praying for him, they thought it was his Angel.

And as the sacred Scriptures teach us, that the blessed Angels have each their appointed task in the several parts of the Almighty's kingdom, so the order of their stations and services, round the throne itself of the great King, sets before us perfect obedience and order. "The Angels stand round about the throne," not as it may happen, but every one in his place.

Thus, in the vision of Isaiah: "The Lord" was seen "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train," that is, His glory, "filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphims, . . . and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory^e." It was the Church Service in perfection, exact regularity and full harmony.

^c Dan. x. 20, 21; xii. 1.

^d S. Matt. xviii. 10.

^e Isa. vi. 1—3.

And such, also, are the pictures presented to us in the high and wonderful visions of S. John in the Revelations. "About the throne were four-and-twenty seats, and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold." And, in another place: "I saw the seven Angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another Angel came and stood at the Altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne¹."

There are many such descriptions in that holy book, all of them implying the most complete order and regularity in the heavenly services, so that the course of what is done in the Churches of Christ on earth is but a faint and humble shadow of what the spirits of the just made perfect may hope then to witness and partake.

In the prophecy of Daniel, again, those blessed assemblies appear to be likened, in some sort, to the courts or judgement-seats of great kings. "§ The Ancient of Days did sit; . . . thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgement was set, and the books were opened." Now we know what reverential silence, what accurate order, is expected to be observed in the courts of kings, and in solemn assemblies held in their presence: and this may give us some notion of the grave and awful majesty, which the saints and glorious spirits continually maintain

¹ Rev. iv. 4; viii. 2, 3.

§ Dan. vii. 9.

in His Presence, Who is the God of peace and order, not of confusion, and before Whom all are commanded to keep silence.

Now this exact order, and perfect obedience of the Angels, the station of each in God's temple, and the task of each in His kingdom, has reference, first, to the glory of God ; next, to the welfare and credit of His Church. "The Angels stood round about the throne, and about the four beasts and the elders." Each had his appointed place, with regard both to Him that sits on the throne, and to the twenty-four elders, and four mysterious animals, who seem to be types of His Church and Gospel. So, throughout the Book of God, we find this double office assigned to them : they are either "before the throne of God, serving Him day and night in His temple," or they are on their errands as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation." Their holy, devotional hymns, and prayers, and contemplations, take up all the time which is not employed in charitable waiting on their brethren of mankind. But whatever honour they offer to God, whatever service they do to us all, is done according to His everlasting law, in its own time, and place, and measure ; there is neither too much nor too little of it : no encroaching by one Angel on the province of another, no neglect of his own.

Now let us not imagine that this angelic order and obedience is no more to us than a distant beautiful vision. Nay, it is both real itself, and it closely touches the duty of every one of us. Did not our Lord Himself teach us to pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven ?" that is, that we should

make the Angels our pattern, and as they worship and minister, so should we try to do here. God is so gracious as to set before us, His fallen unworthy creatures, the same two objects which take up the mind of His Angels. “^h Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do,” we are invited, nay, commanded, to do it all to God’s glory. And when we “wait on the Lord,” it is to be “renewed in our wings like eaglesⁱ ;” strong and active wings, to bear us any whither, where is any Christian to be helped, any bad spirit to be discouraged.

Next, as the Angels all know and keep their places; as the stars do in heaven, to which they are sometimes likened; as we are bidden to “^k lift up our eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one faileth:” so should the servants of Christ be ready, night and morning, and at all times, to answer to their names, when He, as it were, calls them over, and shew that they are in their station, and willing and eager to set about their appointed tasks.

I say, “their *appointed* tasks.” As one blessed spirit does not force himself into the portion of another, but remains content where he was placed by the heavenly Lord and Master of all in common, so ought it to be in the Church and Body of Christ. The sheep must not intrude itself into the portion of the shepherd, nor one shepherd into that of another: each must mind his own work, as each has to bear his own burthen.

^h 1 Cor. x. 31.

ⁱ Is. xl. 31.

^k Ib. 26.

Then in the performance of that work we are not to be inventing ways of our own, but in every thing, small and great, to watch for some sign from Him : where His will is plain, as it is, God be thanked, in most matters of daily duty, there cheerfully and punctually conforming ourselves to it, without asking any more questions ; where it is at first doubtful, seeking it as best we may with prayer and meditation, out of the Scriptures interpreted by the Church.

This way of prompt yet thoughtful obedience is set before us by the psalmist, from the example of the Angels. "Praise the Lord, ye Angels of His, ye that fulfil His commandment ;"—that is, they do it at once when it is plain ;—"and hearken unto the voice of His words ;" that is, they listen devoutly to find out His will, in matters where they do not yet know it.

Again, it is a great point of true angelical service, to take none of the glory to one's self, but to ascribe all to Him. Consider the Angel who shewed to S. John those wonders in the book of the Revelations. When the holy Apostle had heard and seen them, he "fell down to worship before the feet of the Angel." But he said, "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and the fellow-servant of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book : worship God." As this is undoubtedly a caution to all Christians, not to offer to any Angel, even the highest and most blessed, any portion of that honour which is due to God only ; so ought we all to understand by this verse the danger of taking any praise to ourselves ; a great, and subtle, and continual danger, which is ever winding itself round

us, like a poisonous plant, and spoiling the fruit of what otherwise might be our good works.

To guard against it, people should always be saying, not to others, but to themselves, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." They should have rooted in their memories the thought, how many bad and unworthy imaginations they have indulged in before now, all which are known to God and written in His Book. They should dwell in their minds, not on what their friends actually say of them, but on what they would say of them, if they could know their secret sins. This, I suppose, would be one way of effectually resisting the strong temptation, which many of us are continually under, to take the credit of what seems good in us to ourselves.

Another good help to the same purpose, would be to be often looking off from ourselves, and contemplating God's gracious work in the Gospel and kingdom of His Son. And in this, too, the example of the Angels may greatly help us; for even they, in their high estate, S. Peter tells us, "desire to look into" the things which the Holy Ghost made known to the Church by the Apostles¹. And the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the Church, even "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places^m." When therefore we look away from ourselves for a while, and let our thoughts follow the guidance of the Church, especially on her great and holy days, in meditating on heavenly mysteries, we may have the satisfaction of thinking that we are far from being alone. The Angels which stand round about the throne are, we know, employed as we are. We are

¹ 1 S. Pet. i. 12.

^m Eph. iii. 10.

permitted for the time to have some small insight into those deeps of glory and wonder, which they, seeing God as they do with open face, yet desire to look into. This is the blessing offered us, if we would open our hearts to it, when we are invited to join in solemn Church-services, more especially of thanksgiving, or to exercise ourselves at home in devout reading and meditation.

Further: the Angels, when at God's command they employ themselves in ministering to His Church, are filled with heavenly earnestness, and eager desire that His will should be done in all things. If they look towards His enemies, and see Him affronted, His holy Name profaned, His servants vexed, His Word contradicted, and His law disobeyed, such sights fill them with a holy zeal and indignation. According to the epistle of the day, there is at such times "a war in heaven:" the powers of light and darkness are set one against another, "Michael and his Angels fighting against the dragon, and the dragon fighting and his angels." And one may see by the manner of those holy warriors, as it is described in different parts of the Bible, how earnestly they enter into their warfare, like true and loyal soldiers, jealous of their King's honour, and not enduring to see Him disrespectfully used.

So the Angel which met Balaam speaks, as if what he did was all his own doing. "°I came out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me. If the ass had not turned aside, surely now I had killed thee, and saved her alive."

So, in the book of Judges, the Angel of the Lord calls down a bitter curse on a certain place, because

° Rev. xii. 7.

° Numb. xxii. 32, 33.

the inhabitants thereof “came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty ^p.”

But this their zeal is ever chastened by a deep and grave sense of duty and obedience, of the presence of God, and the order and beauty of His kingdom : so that, whereas men think, if they have but a good cause, they may let their tongues loose to high degrees of bitterness, “Michael the Archangel,” we are told, when he was “contending with the devil” himself, “durst not bring against him a railing accusation,” but referred the matter to the judgement of God, saying simply, “The Lord rebuke thee ^q.”

I will mention but one point more of the Angels’ faithful and orderly service ; their deep and most affectionate concern for the little ones of Jesus Christ ; rejoicing in their repentance when they have gone astray, and very much displeased with those who in any way cause them to stumble and transgress. Such must be our concern for one another, if we would at all fulfil our daily prayer, and do our part of God’s will on earth, as the holy Angels do theirs in heaven. We belong to a great company, which Almighty God has vouchsafed to gather round His throne to serve Him, and which He has encompassed on every side with the guard of His holy Angels. If we would fulfil our part in that heavenly assembly, these are the two cautions we must observe. We must do all to the glory of God, yet so as to have an eye always to the good of our brethren, and to avoid causing them to stumble. We must do all to the good of our brethren, yet so as to have an eye throughout to God’s glory, and to the order which He has established.

^p Judges v. 23.

^q S. Jude 9.

SERMON XL.

THE MINISTRY OF THE ANGELS.

S. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

Ps. xci. 11.

“He shall give His Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

As we grow older, and find more and more of our own exceeding frailty and helplessness, we naturally find more and more comfort in days and seasons such as this, which are as a message from heaven to tell us that we are not left alone in the world: that all His good creatures are engaged in our cause and fighting on our side, if only we be true and faithful. For the Church to-day teaches us out of Holy Scripture, that the holy Angels which do God service in heaven, do also by His appointment succour and defend His servants, faithfully praying to Him on earth. As this is a truth full of comfort to elder persons in the trials and temptations of life, when their hearts are well nigh failing them for fear, as they become aware of dangers approaching, and know not how to meet them, considering how very much their own sins may have to do with them: so is it also a truth

most necessary to be thought of by young persons, just setting out in their Christian warfare. Here, e.g. at this very time, are a certain number, who are preparing themselves to receive within a few days, if so it please God, the gift of His Holy Spirit, to strengthen them for the performance of their baptismal vows. Here they are, with their hearts thrown back upon their Baptism, full, as we hope, of deep thought, what a mighty blessing, what a solemn trust, they were then made partakers of, and full also of a godly fear, lest by their own sin or negligence they offend and finally drive away the good Spirit, Who then came to abide in them, making them members of Christ. Is it not a very merciful token of God's fatherly love towards them, that at this very time He calls on them by His Church to think much of His holy Angels, as having been made their guardians in Baptism, and appointed to be their helpers all along?

First, our Lord Himself gives us to understand, by His words in to-day's Gospel, that the holy Angels are made our guardians in Baptism. For, speaking of His little ones, whom we are not to despise, He says, "their Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven *." *Their Angels*: i.e. the Angels who are particularly ordained to take charge of each one of them. Think well of this, my brethren; if it be good for little children to have a kind nurse to take care of them, one whom the parents can thoroughly trust, think what a blessing it must be for one of the bright and glorious beings, so near to God that they always behold His face, to be always watching over

* S. Matt. xviii. 10.

one ; to attend to one with such particular care, that one may truly call him one's own guardian. So that, being once for all entrusted with us by Almighty God, they never leave us nor forsake us, except we drive them away by our sins. As they took charge of us at the Font, so they will cherish and protect us all along. Parents may depart, brethren may fall out, friends may forget or prove unfaithful, but our guardian Angel cannot forget ; he will never leave us, except we drive him away. God has given him charge over us, and he will not desert his charge. He has been bidden to keep us in all our ways ; he will not suffer us to go anywhere by ourselves. His appointed task is to bear us in his hands, and he is no negligent, nor timid, nor unfaithful nurse ; he will not stumble with us, nor let us fall : under his care, there is no fear of our dashing our foot against a stone.

Now as the great thing of all is undoubtedly the Presence of God, Who is about our path and about our bed and spieth out all our ways : so the remembrance of our Angel's presence is undoubtedly a great help, under God, towards holy obedience. Which of us does not often feel something like this ? However dutiful and religious a man may be, still it is a great help to him, to know that the eyes of other good men are fixed upon him ; that he has their prayers and their good wishes ; that they are ready and willing to help him, if occasion should be given. When we are aware of the presence of such an one, it helps us to keep up in our hearts the sense of God's merciful and glorious Presence. If we have any faith, we naturally say to ourselves, "He who put it in my

father's or friend's heart so to love me, and care for me, and watch over me, much more will He keep His own gracious Eye ever open upon me; much more will He provide for me, sleeping and waking, with tenderest care." And so when we think of our unseen guardian, the Angel of the Lord tarrying round about us, it helps us not only to keep from sin, but to lift up our hearts to God in prayer and good purposes, feeling certain that we are not uncared for, nor alone.

You then, who are now preparing to receive God's gracious seal in Confirmation, I advise and beseech you to think much of the holy Angels. For that very purpose, no doubt, God's providence has ordered it that your confirmation should take place so near to Michaelmas Day. He would have you draw near with a deep sense of the wonderful order, in which He has ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men. His heavenly light is given you, that you may discern something of the fair beauty of the Lord, and the glory of His kingdom. Your eyes are opened, to perceive the war which is going on all around you, yea in your very heart, and in the heart more or less of all who are here on their trial: the good spirits against the bad: Michael and his Angels against the dragon, and the dragon also fighting with his angels. You have heard also our Lord's most tender warning, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, That in heaven their Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." You are then to think of yourself, as of one who is waited upon by Angels. It is a thought to be encouraged and re-

newed in your mind very often ; e.g. when you rise in the morning, when God opens your eyes to see the light of another day, when you look out on the works of God, with which, as it may be gathered from Scripture, the ministry of Angels has a great deal to do : then remember those blessed spirits, rejoicing that you are called, at least this one day more, to be their fellow-labourer, both in serving God and in waiting upon mankind. Join in the praises which they offer morning by morning before the everlasting throne : learn of them to praise God more and more perfectly in their divine hymn, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. Look on to the dangers and temptations which will be likely to come upon you in the course of the day, and beg of the great Captain of your salvation that He will allow you a guard of these His heavenly soldiers to help you in passing so far through the enemies' country.

When your morning prayers are over, and you set out on your day's journey through the world, still remember the high companions around you, and how your Master and theirs bade you pray, that you might do His will on earth, even as they do it in heaven : and as it is written of the Angels, that at once, asking no questions, when God calls them, they say, "Here we are," so be it your chief business, all the day through, to obey His voice : to do at once as He bids you, asking no questions.

Especially should you think of the Angels, when any offence is near : when unclean spirits are either about your path or your bed, tempting you to make ill use of your thoughts and your senses, to look at evil things or dream of them : then may it be of the

very greatest use to remember, among other good thoughts, that the holy Angels are at hand: a great, noble, and glorious company, ready to fight with you against that Wicked one, the moment you shew them that you seriously desire their help. The place perhaps is retired and solitary: the evil heart of unbelief whispers, "Why not sin this once? You are quite alone, no eye seeth you: no further harm is likely to come from it." O how deeply does it concern you, to remember, and make sure of it, that, all such times, you are not alone: there are messengers from heaven all around waiting upon us; and can we dare commit in their sight things which we know God hates, the crimes which will be the ruin of our souls? O let us respect the presence of the glorious messengers, and not allow any indecency in any of our looks, nor movements, nor even in our thoughts. We know not how far a single bold look or gesture may go towards encouraging the Evil one, and bringing upon us temptation, which there will be small chance of our overcoming.

If the remembrance of the Angels should help us so far in solitude, so on the other hand it will make us firm and steady, when otherwise perhaps we should be overpowered by numbers. When the whole world seems going after one deceiver or another, false Christs and false prophets, enough, if possible, to deceive the very elect, and turn them away from the Faith of Christ: then recollect that it is written, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." You are in some mixed company, and you hear some miserable unbeliever expressing his doubts of some mysterious truth: per-

haps even he will go on to mock and jeer, either at the word which conveys the truth, or at the persons holding it, or at something belonging to it : and the devil will watch eagerly to see, whether you permit yourself to enter at all into that wicked mirth. If he sees that you do so, he will press you more and more, until he have brought you into a way of confirmed irreverence : and then alas ! what can be done for you ? What can be done for the dead branch, but to cut it off, and cast it into the fire ?

Think of the Angels, again, when your undertakings seem altogether perplexed and hopeless. Then reflect how often, when deliverance seemed impossible, men have cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He hath saved them out of their distress. When they were like men in a storm at sea, reeling to and fro, and staggering like a drunken man, and at their wits' end ; He hath commanded the waves to cease, and stilled the storm by these His unseen messengers. He sent His Angel, you know, to Daniel, and shut the lions' mouths, that they could not hurt him. By His Angel He quenched the violence of fire, and preserved the three friends of Daniel, causing them to pass unhurt through the burning fiery furnace. Nor can any one of us possibly know, how often he too has been wonderfully delivered, in fearful peril, by the ministry of Angels unseen. One hears continually of most remarkable circumstances, hair's breadth escapes, thoughts coming suddenly into a person's mind, whereby lives have been saved, and losses prevented. How very likely does it seem, that a great part of this is by the ministry of the blessed Angels. If the Lord were to open our eyes as He

once did Balaam's, we might see them, sometimes with sword in hand to keep us from doing worse mischief, sometimes carefully removing impediments and putting us in the way of good: and this, I say, we ought all to remember, when we are tempted to give up good purposes and good rules in despair. Let us rather redouble our prayers and our endeavours, and think with ourselves, "Who knows but the good Angel may be even now coming forth to help us, if only we quit us like men, and are strong?"

As Scripture thus teaches us in times of action to hope for God's help through the ministry of Angels, so it encourages us to depend not a little on their guardianship in times of rest. "^bThe Angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." When we lie down to sleep, commending our spirits to Him, it is the Angel of the Lord who watches by the bed, and makes it a bed of rest, and our dwelling safe. It is well that we should think of this every night, and when we beseech God to deliver us from evil, should rest some of our loving hope upon His faithful servants, our loving elder brethren, who are as horses and chariots of fire round about, against those who would hurt Christ's little ones.

Lastly, Holy Scripture and the Church encourage us to think much of the Angels as present in our solemn assemblies, and most especially in Holy Communion, "^cBefore the gods," says the holy psalmist, i.e. in the presence of the Angels, "will I sing praise unto Thee." And in our hymn, we invite the Angels of the Lord to join with us and all other creatures

^b Ps. xxxiv. 7.

^c Ib. cxxxviii. 1.

in blessing the Lord, in praising and magnifying Him for ever. And you know that in our Office for Holy Communion they lend us, as it were, both their solemn hymns: their hymn in heaven just now mentioned, which begins, "Holy, Holy, Holy;" and their hymn on earth, to congratulate us on Christ's Nativity, which begins, "Glory to God in the highest." And S. Paul tells the women who came to Church, that they should observe a certain rule in their behaviour, *because of the Angels*. Now, my brethren, you are some of you preparing to come to this Holy Sacrament for the first time: very many, I hope, are in their minds preparing to receive it worthily before long: let me then this day beg of them to consider more earnestly than usual this special privilege of Christ's children; that they meet His elder children, the good Angels, at His Board, in Holy Communion. If there are but a few of us, yet they are many. If we are lukewarm, yet they are full of zeal. If we are irreverent, yet they are all gathered in heavenly adoration. If we are wandering, they are waiting, with earnest will, to receive more and more light from God concerning those holy Mysteries: as it is written, "which things the Angels desire to look into." Think of them and their awful presence, and fear both to stay away, and to come unworthily: fear, lest through sin and uncleanness not sufficiently repented of, or lightness and irreverence of behaviour, and wilful wanderings at the time, you lose the blessing, or even turn it into a curse. Think with yourselves, "The very Angels, the highest of them, hide their faces before this majestic Presence: the heavens, in a certain sense, are not pure in His

sight: how much less I, a sinful Christian, born in sin, imperfect in penitence, blemished with so many infirmities! At least, let me humble myself and be very serious: at least let me try and do my best for the time."

And fearful as the thought is, we must recollect also that there are bad spirits as well as good. The services of the day remind us of them: there has been war in heaven, and Satan hath come among the sons of God, presenting themselves before the Lord. There is always reason to fear that he is at hand, even in our Churches and Communion, to make the most of any advantage we give him. It is a thought to make us very grave, very humble. But it need not distress or confound us: only let us try in earnest to come with clean and prepared hearts, and to be on the Angels' side, both here in Church and in the great warfare of the world: and the Lord of the Angels will be with us now, and in the hour of death."

SERMON XLI.

THE TOUCH OF CHRIST AN INFALLIBLE CURE.

S. LUKE'S DAY,

S. MATT. xiv. 36.

"As many as touched (Him) were made perfectly whole."

OUR Church, in the collect to-day, reminds us that S. Luke was a physician as well as an evangelist, and the yearly return of the day of his martyrdom may well be taken by all good and dutiful hearts, as a call from Almighty God to thank Him very earnestly and sincerely for His tender care of our poor frail bodies, in providing us with medicines and persons to apply them. His goodness in this respect is like His care for our clothing. When Adam and Eve had sinned, and their eyes were opened, and the misery of nakedness came upon them, the Lord God, their compassionate Judge, made coats of skins and clothed them. Left to themselves, their nakedness alone would have made their lives altogether helpless and miserable. But He did not leave them to themselves; He had pity on them in their forlorn condition, and provided them with decent and comfortable raiment: assuaging by His mercy, the shame

and misery, which in His Justice He was, as it were, obliged to bring upon them.

As God deals with us in the matter of clothing, so in the matter of medicine and cure of ill-health. Sickness, as well as death, is part of the punishment denounced in the beginning against sin: but our gracious Maker, by the ways of His good providence, so loving and gentle, has turned the punishment to a blessing; providing physicians, and giving them skill to wait on us: a sure token that He smites us in love: He wounds that He may heal in the end. You may judge of your Maker's goodness in so relieving you, by just considering for a moment what is the first thought, when you find yourself or any one belonging to you seriously ill. What a difference does it then make, whether or no you know of any physician, in whom you have confidence! whether or no he is within reach, and you are able to obtain a visit from him in good time! and when he has been sent for, how earnestly is his presence longed for, and how eagerly do people welcome his footsteps, when they perceive him to be at the door! Their longing after him is such as S. Paul expresses, when he calls Luke "the *beloved*" physician, signifying how long the time seems, till he makes his appearance, and how the sufferer feels as if he could not do without him. Most of us, I say, who have lived any time in the world, know all this by experience; we know something of the inexpressible relief, when we are watching by the sick bed of one near and dear to us, when God sends a physician whom we can trust, and we feel that we are right in obeying him, and in no long time perhaps we perceive something

of the good effect of his remedies. All surely, who have felt this for themselves or for others, are bound to make it an occasion of special thanksgiving to God : and what more natural than they should remember to do so, on the memorial day of that saint, whom Holy Scripture recommends to us as the pattern of a Christian physician ?

But S. Luke was not only the beloved physician : he was also an evangelist and physician of the soul. When he came into the room to visit a sick person, he was (if one may so speak) the clergyman and physician in one, bringing peace and health to body and soul alike : and by how much the soul is more precious than the body, and eternity worth more than time, by so much ought our praise and thanksgivings, this day, to go up more earnestly to Almighty God for His healing mercies in the Gospel, than even for all that He has done and is doing for our poor frail distempered bodies. We know from Holy Scripture, that bodily sickness is but a type and shadow of the worse sickness of the soul, i. e. sin, and its many frightful and loathsome consequences. Hear the psalmist, in the same words giving an account both of sin and sickness, "There is no health in my flesh because of Thy displeasure ; my wounds stink and are corrupt through my foolishness. For my loins are filled with a sore disease : and there is no whole part in my body. I am feeble and sore smitten : I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart." And as sin is like sickness, so the work of healing the one is very like the work of healing the other. God Himself is the only One Who can cure either ; but in both it pleases Him

to use men as His ministers: in both, He requires a certain faith and obedience on the part of the sufferer, (if he have the use of his senses), and on the part of the minister, gentleness, charity, consideration, patience: and as you know that, at the beginning of our Office for Visitation of the sick, the minister is put in mind of the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself to say at least in his heart, "Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it," so no doubt a Christian physician or nurse will do well to lift up his heart in inward prayer, that the great Physician would bless his work, on his entering the sick room. In short, the outward work of mercy to the body, and the inward work of mercy to the soul, as they both come from the same Jesus, so they are very like each other from beginning to end. But there are two great differences, which I think well to point out to you. On the one hand, whereas nature herself teaches the sick person to rejoice at the approach of the physician, to watch for him eagerly, and to welcome him when he comes; it is not so in respect of the evangelist and physician of the soul. Nature, corrupt and fallen nature, will set you strongly against him. We know how unwilling people often are to have the priest sent for, even when they are very far gone in illness. Sometimes, no doubt, it may be a kind of timidity, partly arising from their sickness: but I fear we may not doubt that very often it is their shrinking from serious thought and from the searching of their conscience, to which they have not at all used themselves. Sending for the priest is owning death and judgement to be near, and that alas! is an acknowledgement which they are very

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unwilling to make, although in the bottom of their hearts they know quite for certain that it cannot be otherwise. Many times they are conscious of distinct sins, known sins, deadly sins, such as uncleanness, drunkenness, cheating, neglect of God's worship, which they expect to hear of from the pastor, but which they have not yet made up their minds to give up. For these and the like reasons men whose souls are sick to the heart, and who know something of their own spiritual danger, are yet most unwilling (whether sick or well in their bodies) to hear advice from their spiritual physician. And what thousands, what tens of thousands there are, whose souls are diseased, mortally diseased, nay dead in trespasses and sins, who have not even got so far as to have any suspicion of their own sickness: they either think themselves good enough, or they do not think at all about it, one way or the other; and all these are of course set against the Gospel message, which begins by telling them how bad they are, and in what danger of being turned into hell! At first, they can hardly tell what it means; and when they do come a little to comprehend it, there is one at hand always ready to persuade them that it is all nothing and they had better enjoy themselves, while they can. So the devil secretly whispers to you: and there are plenty of bad people round you, and bad desires in your own hearts, to encourage you in listening to him. What then becomes of the Gospel message? And what wonder, if it appear very often to return to Him Who sent it, void, and if they who bring it, the messengers of Christ, go away in sadness, seeming to have done no good?

This then is the great disadvantage belonging to the work of spiritual medicine; the healing of the soul as compared with that of the body: viz. that the patient is naturally set against you, disposed not to hear you, nor try your remedies. On the other hand, there is this great advantage, the special gift of Almighty God through Jesus Christ our Lord to all true evangelists and physicians of the soul, that whereas the effect of outward and bodily medicine must be in every case more or less uncertain, and a time will come when it is sure to fail, be the physician ever so skilful, and the patient ever so obedient: it is far otherwise with the spiritual remedy. That, truly applied and received, is infallible: it cannot miss of curing: it will be the health and salvation, both of body and soul, for ever, not of one here and one there; not of a very large proportion of those who take it, but of every one without exception: as surely as He spake truth, Who said, "Come unto Me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus Christ says *all*. He leaves not out a single one, man, woman, or child. The remedy which He hath ready for them is perfect and unfailing: therefore the true spiritual physician may say to his patients, what the bodily physician, if he be careful to speak truth, must not venture to say, "Take this, for it is a certain and infallible cure."

Let us now, by God's blessing, try to see distinctly, what this unerring remedy is; this wholesome medicine, concerning which we have God's own Word, that by it "*all* the diseases of our souls" shall be healed. It is just this, partaking of Christ: of Christ,

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Who being God made Himself Man, that He might give Himself to us, on the Cross for our redemption, in the Sacraments for our spiritual cleansing and Nourishment. Christ the great Physician gives Himself to be our Medicine: and we, His ministers, do our duty as physicians and healers under Him, when we do our best to make every one of you really and spiritually partakers of Christ. This which is the sum and substance of the whole Gospel, the good news which our Lord would have preached in all the world, He taught and signified, while He was on earth by the manner in which He wrought most of His mighty works. E. g. Just after He had fed the five thousand &c. and had walked on the water and enabled S. Peter to do the same, He having come to land, the men of that place knew Him and sent into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased; "and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole^a." Or, as S. Mark relates the same thing: "They ran through that whole region . . . and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was: and whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch, if it were but the border of His garment: and as many touched Him were made whole^b." The point, you see, was to *touch* Him: for now they had found by happy experience, that "there went virtue out of Him and healed them all." All, whatsoever their complaint was: "all sick people that were taken with divers

^a S. Matt. xiv. 35, 36.^b S. Mark vi. 55, 56.

diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy, &c. All found their cure from Him, and most commonly they found it by touching Him: either His very Body, as when He laid His Hands on them Himself, and when He took any by the hand and lifted them up; or something belonging to Him. It might be one or other of His disciples acting by His special commission, or as in the woman with the issue of blood, whose example was soon followed by other sufferers, it might be only touching, with His leave, the hem of His garment. Whichever way it was, it made no difference; it was Virtue going out of Christ, out of His Blessed Body, and the sufferer was made perfectly whole.

Why was this, but to teach all sinners always, that forgiveness, and cleansing, and spiritual health and strength, are to be found in Christ, and in Christ only? He was manifested to take away our sins, to take our infirmities and bear our sicknesses, first by making Himself one of us, then by suffering on the Cross the penalty due to our transgressions, and lastly by applying Himself to us, one by one, to be the life and light, the righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, of each several Christian, man, woman and child: Christ dwelling in us and we in Him. These are the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by all evangelists and physicians of the soul, whereby, if it be not our own fault, all the diseases of our souls may and will be healed: and in particular these are the medicines prescribed to us by Luke the beloved physician, seeing that in *his* Gospel the Incarnation of our Lord, the history of

His Conception and Birth, is set forth more at large than in either of the other three. S. Luke's is also in a special sense the Gospel of Sacrifice and pardon, the Gospel for penitent sinners: being the only one of the four which has in it the history of the penitent thief, of Zacchæus, and of the woman which was a sinner, and the comfortable parable of the prodigal son: places, most healing surely, and full of all consolation to souls deeply wounded and smarting, grieved and wearied with the burden of their sins.

Thus is the medicine provided for us. The Son of God made Man is evidently set forth crucified among us. But as the most perfect and infallible medicine will do the sick man no good unless it be taken, so it is in this case: we must take the medicine and apply it to ourselves; else, after all, it will not be the saving of our souls. How then is Christ crucified to be partaken of by each one of us? How are His merits, how is His blessed Person, to be communicated to us, that sinners should dwell in Christ, and Christ in sinners? By faith; for it is written, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith:" by united prayer, for He has promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them^d:" but most directly and especially by Sacramental Union, "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ^e:" and "Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him^f." Of this blessing, spiritual healing by the inward touch of Christ in His Church and Sacraments, all the miracles of outward healing

^c Eph. iii. 17.^d S. Matt. xviii. 20.^e Gal. iii. 27.^f S. John vi. 56.

in the Gospels and Acts are signs and tokens. Such virtue went out of Him, out of His life-giving Body, that not only His own Touch, but the touch of His clothes, the touch of His Apostles and seventy disciples, nay, and the touch of *their* clothes too, the handkerchief or apron of Paul, or the very shadow of Peter, falling on this side or on that, proved, by His mercy, means of working wonderful cures. In themselves, all those things were nothing: S. Peter and S. Paul were, as other frail mortals: their dresses, yea the robe of our Lord Himself, were as other pieces of linen or woollen. It was the Touch of Christ, that made the difference for the healing of bodies; and now it is the participation of Christ, God and Man, by which souls are healed and saved.

Do you indeed believe this, my brethren? In a way, I dare say you do: you quite believe, that you cannot be saved without Christ: but I fear, I fear, that a good many of you indulge a blind dreamy sort of hope, that Christ will somehow save you without any deep personal religion of your own: without your turning to Him and away from the world in good earnest, with a new heart and a new spirit. I dare say you think that, if our Lord had vouchsafed to come here, and walk the streets of this place in Person visibly, as He did the streets of Jerusalem and Capernaum, you, believing Him to be the Son of God, would have drawn near Him: you feel as if in that case, especially if you had need of healing, you would have humbled yourself before Him and sought to touch the hem of His garment, in good earnest: you would not at that moment have been minding other things: laughing and playing with

one another. Well: but here He is, come to heal you, offering Himself in His Scriptures, for you to hear His Voice; in His Sacrament, for you actually to partake of Him. The whole Church and everything in it belongs to Him: your coming here is as if you drew near to touch Him. Take care then, dear brethren, it is an awful thing to come here: just as, when He was on earth, it was an awful thing to draw near Him: for His touch was not always a saving touch: there were some who drew near in disrespect, in hypocrisy, in malice: as Judas, the wicked Jews and their men, and the heathen soldiers; Judas kissing Him to betray Him, the others laying hands on Him to bind, to mock, to torment Him. Do you think their touching Christ did them any good? No surely: neither will yours, if you draw near to Him with careless impenitent hearts, and behave yourselves amiss in His Presence.

But come here with faith: come here (as, if you have any faith, of course you will come), with hearts desiring and endeavouring to be serious: and then the Healer of your souls, Christ crucified, will very graciously meet you here. Whatever your past sins may have been, whatever imperfections He may yet see in your heart, He will even now help you by His Spirit to apply His Atoning Sacrifice to them: He will help you, as surely as He helped those whom the holy evangelist and physician of this day tells us of in his Gospel; for, as I pointed out to you before, S. Luke's Gospel only it is, whereby we know anything of the penitent thief, of the woman that was a sinner, of Zacchæus, or of the prodigal son. Remember these, and take courage, all you who

have come here this morning, not in idleness, not in formality, but earnestly desiring pardon and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Pray and strive to go on in that good mind, in Church and out of Church. He will come nearer and nearer to you, will encourage you more and more to touch Him in His Holy Sacrament of Communion : do you go on answering to His calls : sooner or later you will feel, what now you only *read* or *hear*, that “as many as touch Him, are made perfectly whole.”

SERMON XLII.

THE COMPANION OF THE SAINTS.

S. LUKE'S DAY.

Ps. cxix. 63.

"I am a companion of all them that fear Thee ; and keep Thy commandments."

THE epistle for this day instructs us to think of the evangelist S. Luke as the companion of the Apostle S. Paul; and that more especially, when he was very near his end. Being in prison and expecting before long to be martyred for his Lord's sake, S. Paul writes to Timothy to come to him, saying, that he would be quite left alone, if it were not for one true friend; and that friend was S. Luke. "Only Luke," he says, "is with me."

It was no new thing for S. Luke to be with S. Paul. The Acts of the Apostles shew that he had been his companion in many and great dangers, before his first imprisonment in Rome; for he continually says, "*We came to such a place,*" "*We kneeled down and prayed,*" "*We all got safe to land,*" and other such expressions; by which a diligent reader may very well make out, where he first joined the Apostle, and how long he continued with him.

And again, if we look into those epistles, which we know were written by S. Paul when he was first imprisoned in Rome, we find that S. Luke was still with him; for he sends greeting from S. Luke to Philemon, and to others at a distance.

And here we find them still together in S. Paul's second imprisonment, and as near his death as the New Testament history gives any account of him.

Now undoubtedly this, to the eye of faith, was a very great privilege given by the Almighty to the holy evangelist S. Luke. Even a careless, unthinking person, if he be not quite an unbeliever, will perceive and acknowledge that so it is. We are all quite ready to say, "Truly, it must have been a blessed thing to be present at the last hours of such a person as S. Paul; to be with him in prison; to hear his high and noble thoughts, as the Holy Spirit opened to him more and more the true meaning of the Scriptures of God; to pray with him night and morning; to listen to his instructions; to partake with him in the Church services, and especially in the Holy Communion; and, perhaps, to be by him in the very moment of his martyrdom, when he was beheaded for the sake of Jesus Christ."

There is not one of us but feels, when he really thinks of this, that it was a great and blessed thing to be the companion of such a man; and, perhaps some of us may imagine, that it would have made all the difference to themselves, if God had cast their lot in such company. If we had been with such persons as S. Paul, especially in their dying hours, we are apt to fancy, we should never have forgotten such instructions and such an example.

But let us not be too sure. The company and example of the saints of God, like all other spiritual and heavenly privileges, takes effect upon men, according as they are prepared by their own former conduct, and disposed in their own hearts. The company and example of our blessed Lord Himself, we know, did not amend nor save Judas, because he brought to it a perverse and covetous heart, and refused to be the better for it. Yet, I suppose, even Judas himself, had he heard at a distance of such a person as Christ, at least of some parts of what He said and did; even Judas, I say, would have admired Him, and thought it good to be with Him. And so it may be in the case of the saints of Christ, living and dead. Many men may be touched with what they read or hear of them, and may seem to themselves, as if they longed to be with them, who, if they really were brought into their company, would very soon be tired and disgusted, and long to be away from them. Many may have engaging dreams (if one may so call them) of S. Paul in prison, who would never have profited as S. Luke did, by being companion of the blessed Apostle.

For let us consider the case more nearly. Here is a person, poor, despised, of weak bodily presence and contemptible speech, shut up in a prison, from which he has no earthly hope of escape, and out of which he is daily expecting to be led to a cruel death: and it will be a shameful death too, for he will be punished as a criminal, and most part of the people will insult him, believing him guilty. What is there in this to tempt or delight any one, except it were one who had a faith like the faith of S. Paul

himself; such a faith as could look through all this cloud of troubles to the glorious end, the crown of righteousness?

Again, what if the Apostle spake, almost as never man spake, about the love of God to His people, and the things prepared for them that love Him? All this would fall dead and useless on the ears of men, taken up hitherto with the diversions, and business, and imaginations of this present evil world. To associate with him from morning to night, and hear his good and holy sayings, and observe the Christian use he would make of all things, would be but flat and wearisome work to a mind taken up with the love of this world; a mind selfish and impatient, sensual and greedy.

To take an instance which every one can understand:—How would a mere ordinary person, a child of this world, used always to indulge himself, how would such an one like to be with the Apostle on his fasting-days? We know that he did keep fasts; that he restrained his body and brought it into subjection: he denied himself in many things, which the generality of men, even such as were called respectable, took freely, as of course. In such respects his company could not be very agreeable to them, however much they may have admired him on other accounts, when they heard of him at a distance.

But S. Luke had been long used to delight in the same things as S. Paul. He had been, as one may say, in training for this life of imprisonment and self-denial. When he first joined himself to S. Paul, he knew that he should have to suffer affliction, and it came on him very soon; for the very next place

they preached in, we read of S. Paul and Silas being scourged and imprisoned, and delivered only by a miracle. Thus he was used to danger, pain, and shame: he had his soul, as the Psalmist says, "always in his hand;" that is, he felt continually, how very uncertain his life was; he knew he could not count on it for a moment, nor yet on any of the comforts which make life tolerable; and thus he was well prepared to attend the teacher, whom he had so long loved, both in prison and to death.

But if his life had been, from the beginning, a life of ease and self-satisfaction, how different would it all have seemed! Even if his love for his friend had caused him to wait diligently on him, yet he could not have done it so effectually. His devout and affectionate purposes would have been continually more or less interrupted with thoughts of his own uneasiness. He would have missed very much of S. Paul's good example, and of his holy and instructive words, from being so greatly taken up with himself. And much of what he did see and hear, he would not at all have understood, the Christian ways being altogether new to him.

For we may depend upon it, that as it is a hard thing to enter into the meaning of the Scriptures or of the Church, or what is called in the Bible "the mind of Christ," so it is no easy matter to understand and value the behaviour of any of Christ's saints, in such measure as they really come up to the name. There will always be things in every good man's conduct, which will seem strange, and harsh, and unaccountable, to those who are below him in goodness. He will often keep silence where

they would expect him to speak; he will be grave, where they look for encouragement from him; composed and calm about matters, in which they think it impossible to be too eager; and he will very often see deep meanings, and act accordingly, on occasions which they would turn from, as merely trifling. In short, it must require a good deal of Christian practice, to enable a man to enter into the spirit of any one who is worthy to be followed, and really to make the most of his example.

S. Luke seems to have been a pattern of this. His whole manner of writing proves, that he answered well to David's description of a good Churchman, one worthy to abide in God's tabernacle, as in other respects, so in this: that he "made much of them that fear the Lord^a." *That*, no doubt, was what he looked to: he did not seek after amusing companions, nor such as would better his condition, or advance his credit and consequence in the world.

Nor, even among Christians, did he seek to be with eloquent or learned persons, or persons called wise, or much followed by the people. But the one thing which he sought was this, a heart set upon fearing God, and a life spent in keeping his commandments. Where he found that, to such an one he was presently ready to become a companion.

Or, as it is in another psalm, "^b All his delight " was "in the saints that are in the earth, and in such as excel in virtue." These are very sacred words, for they are spoken in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And they shew plainly, what sort of company we must keep, if we would be minded

^a Ps. xv. 4.

^b Ib. xvi. 3.

like Christ, and approved by Him. We must not look on things after the outward appearance; we must not be carried away with beauty, or strength, or skill, or what is called cleverness, or with learning, or with mirth and amusing ways, or with any such thing: we must always stop and ask ourselves, "Does this man fear God? Does he keep His commandments?" before we choose any to be our friend.

And, on the other hand, when we clearly see that any one is truly devout in his life and conversation, a lover of God and good men, a humble and watchful servant of Christ, and an obedient member of His Holy Catholic Church, we ought not to draw back from him on account of any outward disadvantages, or for any of the thousand fanciful reasons which, as weak vain mortals, we are apt to be so much governed by. S. Luke did not so withdraw himself from the great Apostle, because "his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible." He was superior to such childish unworthy feelings.

And this is the more remarkable, as it seems from S. Luke's writings, and from what is told concerning him, that he was a person of more education, higher breeding, as it is called, than the holy writers were in general. No doubt he was a judge of good speaking, fine writing, and other such matters, and of what is beautiful and otherwise. There was a tradition among the ancient Christians, that he was a painter of no small skill. But none of these things moved him, neither outward beauty, nor ready speech, nor worldly wisdom and accomplishments; but he chose to be with S. Paul, because he saw that S. Paul was chief among those who feared God and kept His com-

mandments. It was not for his own pleasure, or credit, or consequence, that he joined himself to the Apostle, but for the salvation of his soul; and therefore he did not look to those things in his friend, which the world might take notice of and admire, but to his bright and pure example, and to the grace of God which was in him.

And having made his choice, he kept constantly to it. Others fell away from S. Paul's company, when times grew bad and death seemed to draw near. Demas forsook him, as thinking himself well off in this present world; and not only Demas, but many others: for he writes, that when he first appeared on his trial before Cæsar, no man stood by him, but all forsook him. "Only Luke," he says, "is with me."

Thus we see how constant *their* friendship is, which is founded on the fear of God, and keeping His commandments. It fails not, for it is builded on a rock, and that rock is Christ; Christ, in Whom such friends are firmly knit together, as members of the same body, and cannot, therefore, fail to have the same care one of another.

But again, we see that the evangelist was not content with merely admiring, and loving, and following the Apostle, but that he also employed himself in many things, which did great service to the Church. He wrote that precious Gospel, which was and is his praise in all the Churches. He was sent by S. Paul on errands of charity, being chosen to go a long journey, in charge of a sum which had been collected for the saints at Jerusalem. And as S. Paul calls him in one place "the beloved physician," so we may well believe, that the experience he had

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in his first profession helped him much in that charitable waiting, both on the souls and bodies of men, which belonged to him in his second and higher office of evangelist and physician of the soul.

I will mention one more circumstance in S. Luke's character, which particularly qualified him to be a companion of good and holy men, namely, the delight which he plainly took in watching and remembering their exemplary ways; making much of them, and setting them down, that they might not pass away as in a dream; and again, in observing and noting down the wonderful turns and order of God's Providence, in regard of them and of His whole Church.

Being so minded, the Almighty chose out S. Luke from among all the disciples, to write the Church history, from the birth of S. John Baptist to the imprisonment of S. Paul in Rome. This was a glorious privilege indeed, for one whose delight was in the saints, or, rather, in the Lord Jesus, both in Himself, and as manifested in His saints. And surely it is a great encouragement also, to all such as humbly and obediently apply themselves to watching and copying the examples of holy men departed; seeking praise, not for themselves, but for them, and for the God Who sanctified them.

We have seen the high privileges of the evangelist S. Luke, and how he was trained and prepared for them, and made much of them. It is a matter to be much considered, and laid to heart by every one of us. For certainly, whether we consider it or no, we are sharers, to a great degree, in those divine favours which S. Luke enjoyed; and if we are not trying to make the same use of them as he did, if

we are not greatly the better for them, we must be greatly the worse.

All of us, I say, are partakers in S. Luke's privileges ; I mean, in the spiritual advantages he enjoyed as a companion of the fervent Apostle S. Paul. For we, too, are in a measure companions of S. Paul ; we are made acquainted with him by his sacred writings, and by S. Luke's own history of him : we read and hear of him a great deal, both in school and in Church. Now, what is S. Paul to us ? Why did God's providence take order, that we should so often be brought to remembrance of him, except because it was His will, that we should follow S. Paul's example ? Are we, generally, trying to follow it ?

Again, most of us know some one or more friends, whom we believe, without any question, to be serious in God's service, trying to do all their duty. We have, perhaps, all of us, more or less, opportunities of intercourse with such persons. Let us understand that those opportunities are so many favours and privileges from God Almighty ; they are talents, of which we must give account ; if abused or hidden, they will add to the weight, which will sink us down irrevocably in the Day of Judgement.

Why is it that people do not consider this more ? Why are many of us so little the better for the goodness of those, among whom we live ?

One reason is, I suppose, that we have not generally chosen our companions for being good, and holy, and devout. If we have lived among such, it was God's mercy that brought us near them ; it was not at all our own doing. As for us, when we could choose, we became, like the heathen, "vain in our

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imaginations:” our foolish hearts chose out to be our friends, showy, pleasant people, or people of consequence in the world; if they chanced also to be religious people, no thanks to us for it; and no wonder, therefore, if we were little the better for their friendship. Plainly, then, for the time to come, our duty is, when we have a choice, to join ourselves to none but such as really fear God. If we thus watch for heavenly goodness, and go out of our way to seek it, we shall, of course, deal reverently with it, when we find it, and God in His mercy will give us a portion in it.

Next, let us take care, that being their companions, we do not abuse their kindness to any worldly purpose whatsoever; any more than S. Luke made use of his friendship with S. Paul to increase his own influence in the Church. This will leave our minds free to receive all the good, which He, by such companions, intended us.

And let us be very doubtful of our own constancy; very much afraid what might happen, if at any time our friendship with them called on us to deny ourselves severely. S. Paul had a Demas among his companions, who forsook him when danger came on: and who knows what our case might be, if tribulation and persecution arose for our Lord’s sake? It is one thing to be with good men, and enjoy their sweetness and kindness, and admire their noble thoughts and Christian wisdom, when all seems quiet and easy around; and it is quite another thing to stand by them, and cleave to their good ways, when it brings reproach and self-denial, poverty, and pain, and toil, and perhaps even danger.

To prepare us, therefore, for such severer trials, let us be very attentive to the ways in which they are preparing themselves. Let us carefully notice, how they use silently to prefer other persons' pleasure and profit to their own; how they give up their own opinions, submit to affronts, refuse to have their own way: and let us be sure that what they do in secret in thus inwardly disciplining themselves, is a great deal more than what they do in our sight. God Almighty sees in them very many self-denials and restraints, which none of us can know any thing of.

We are too much used to say, "I love and admire such an one, and I wish I could be like him; but I *cannot*, it is not in my nature." The true way is to say little about them, but to think and pray a great deal; and to copy, as we may in little things, their humble and holy ways, that the world may not prevail against us, and separate us from them, when great occasions arise.

One thing more: we must be on our guard, that we sin not, before we are aware, in idolizing these, the earthly members of our Lord; thinking on them, and depending on them, when all our thoughts and trusts ought to mount up to Him, Who is their Head and ours. Our knowledge of holy men, living and dead, should ever lead us back to Jesus Christ, such as He manifested Himself on earth; even as S. Luke's intimacy with S. Paul qualified him to write his Gospel. Let it be our labour in this world to please Him by following His saints, and it shall be our joy and crown of rejoicing, in His Presence, at His coming.

SERMON XLIII.

INWARD MANIFESTATIONS OF CHRIST.

S. SIMON AND S. JUDE.

S. JOHN xiv. 22.

“Judas saith unto Him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”

THIS verse contains one of the very few notices found in the Gospels, of S. Jude, one of the saints of this day, and author of the short epistle, part of which you have just heard. Of S. Simon, the other saint of the day, nothing at all is told us in the New Testament; only his name appears in the list of the other Apostles, with an addition, Simon the Canaanite, or Simon Zelotes; so called, because he was, in some sense or other, remarkable for his zeal and earnestness in the cause of Almighty God.

It is, and so most likely will be to the end, a great secret, why so little is known of these and others of our Lord's favoured Apostles. Their names, indeed, are preserved to us, but, in other respects, they seem almost to have perished, as though they had never been.

I say, they *seem*; for, in fact, we know not how much we owe to them; how much of the treasure of holy knowledge and good example, which the Church is gathering for her children, age after age, came, in the first place, under the Holy Ghost, from some of those, whose names are so nearly forgotten. To shew what I mean: suppose S. Jude's question, in the text, had not been set down in the Gospel, but only our Lord's answer, in the next verse, it would still have been equally true, that S. Jude gave occasion to that gracious answer, though we should not have known, that we are at all indebted to him for it.

Besides, we cannot tell in what thousands of mysterious ways those holy men may have done us good, or may be doing it even now; us, or our friends, or the whole Church of God. The members of that holy Church, living and dead, are so wonderfully linked together, and do in such measure rejoice and sorrow one with another, that we may never dare to believe ourselves unconnected with any believer in Christ, past, present, or to come: nor shall we know, till the last great day, whom we are to thank, as instruments of God's saving mercies.

This seems to make it the more inexcusable, if we do not thankfully apply ourselves to consider the few scattered accounts, which yet remain, of the holy sayings and doings of those favoured men: as, for example, this of S. Jude, in the text. What was the occasion and purpose of the question, which he here puts to our Lord? and what may we learn of it, which, by God's blessing, may sink deep into our hearts, and do us good for ever?

Our Lord, in His last comfortable discourse, had

just been warning His holy Apostles, that His going away, contrary to outward appearance, would be the greatest of blessings for them. "Yet a little while," He said, "and the world seeth Me no more: but ye see Me. Because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and manifest Myself unto him."

Such was our Saviour's gracious promise: giving them to understand, that in some high and wonderful way, they, His chosen friends, would be the better and happier even for His departing out of their sight; that the farther He should be from them, in a worldly sense, the nearer they would find Him in a spiritual sense. No doubt it caused them to muse very deeply, what this departure might be, and why it should be necessary. Their weak hearts, it may be, revolted from the change which His words seem to foretel, with a sort of indistinct feeling, that, however blessed that change might be, they would, at the bottom, be well content to let things alone, to remain in outward and visible society with Him.

It might be something of the same sort of feeling, with which even good men, generally speaking, appear to receive intimation of their own approaching death, or of the death of some dear friend. They doubt not of the mercies which God has in store, but over them, as yet, there hangs a cloud, and they would be thankful, could they be sure of it, to remain a while longer as they are.

Thus, when S. Jude said to our Lord, "How is it, that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" we may, perhaps, understand him to mean, "What need of this change, which Thy words seem to signify? Why remove this, Thy Bodily Presence, from us, of which the world can take notice? We know not, how to be happy without it."

If we so understand the Apostle's words, we shall see that our Lord's answer completely satisfies his doubt. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is the great privilege of Christians, whereof He speaks: that He, though absent in sight, is yet, in deed, more immediately present with His saints, than if He had remained in their sight: coming with His Father to dwell in their hearts and bodies, by the wonderful working of His Holy and Almighty Spirit.

S. Jude, then, and the rest of the Apostles, were not to be cast down at His departing out of their sight; they were to rest assured, that by faith He would be nearer them than ever. And not to them only, but to all Christian people; all who have not forfeited the blessing given them in their Baptism. For He says not, "If *you*, My own Apostles, love Me, and keep My words;" but, "If *any man* love Me, and keep My words." All Christians, all members of Christ, have this wonderful promise and gift, the Father and the Son coming to them, and making Their abode with them.

This gracious assurance S. Jude obtained, for himself and for us all, by enquiring of our Lord, in faith and affection, why it was necessary that He should

go out of sight, and manifest Himself hereafter to His Apostles only, not to the world.

Now it is very much to be observed, in what manner and order our Lord teaches us to seek from Him this greatest of blessings, the abiding presence of the Most Holy Trinity, to Whom we have been joined in our Baptism. He does not say, "If a man knows the Gospel thoroughly, and can give a good account of it in words;" nor, again, does He say, "If his feelings be very strong about his own unworthiness, and the power of the Blood of Christ, then this heavenly communion will be his;" but He says, "If he *love* Me, he will keep My words," and so the blessing will come to him. He will not feel it, nor know it, except by his obedience: just as our bodily life is felt and known, only by our doing the deeds of a living man.

This seems to shew, how we ought to deal with ourselves, in regard to all the great things and wonderful secrets of the kingdom of heaven. They were none of them intended to be secrets for ever: on the contrary, our Saviour Himself says of them, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither is any thing kept secret, but that it should be known and come abroad." Not, however, all at once, nor any how, nor to all sorts of persons, but in due order, manner, and time, and to those who are fitly prepared.

Do we, then, desire to know, as S. Jude did, why or how our Lord and Saviour manifests Himself to His Church, and not to the world? We must take that method of study, which He Himself has pointed

• S. Mark iv. 22.

out to us: we must practise ourselves, night and day, in loving Him and keeping His commandments: then the blessing itself will be always with us, and the knowledge and understanding of the blessing will follow in due time.

For example: we wish perhaps to know and understand, what that great thing is, which the Church continually offers to us in the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Altar: and some of us, perhaps, are uneasy about going in ignorance, and think it would be more their duty to go, and the blessing would be greater, if they understood it all more clearly. But this might or might not be so. For the blessing does not, in the least degree, depend on the clearness of our understanding, but on our coming with an honest and good heart, and with very deep and earnest religious fear.

Again, we hear and read wonderful things of Holy Baptism, and would like to know more of it; we would like to be instructed, how it should make so great difference in the condition of a little infant, and turn him from a child of wrath to a child of grace. Well, there is but one way of knowing: watch, pray, strive continually to keep the promise and vow which you then made, and God will, bye and bye, open your eyes, to see the great work which the Holy Ghost has been working in you, more plainly than ever the children of Israel saw the pillar of fire and of the cloud guiding them safely out of Egypt. I say, bye and bye, that is, in the other world; in the day wherein the Son of Man, and all His gracious dealings with us, shall be revealed. For it should seem, that until then we cannot be made holy enough to

receive this high and heavenly knowledge: and when that day comes, the knowledge God will give us will not be the same to all, but measured out to each person, in proportion to nothing else but to his love of Christ, and zeal in keeping His words.

Whichever way, therefore, we look at the matter, all comes back to the same thing, that is, holy and Christian obedience. That is the mind, to which Christ will manifest Himself, and not at all to the world, not at all to those who continue in unfaithfulness and sin; and less and less to those, who having been once near Him, (as in our childhood we all were,) are falling away into an impenitent state. For, as the Evil one "goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour," so, and much more, does our Lord and Saviour go about continually, seeking whom He may save. Hear His own gracious words: "bBehold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me:" that is, "if he love Me and keep My words, there will be secret heavenly communion going on between him and Me," beyond what words can express, or thought of man's heart understand in this world.

Let no person, then, be out of heart, because he is poor, weak, and ignorant, and hears great things when he comes here, which he cannot go along with, or understand. Let him but go steadily on, loving Christ, and keeping His word, and he is in a sure way to know the meaning of all, in a happy experience, for ever.

But there is another part of this subject which

^b Rev. iii. 20.

must also be very much thought of. What if any person, having been made partaker of the unspeakable Gift, fall away afterwards, and leave off loving Christ, and keeping His word : what is to become of him ? Surely, the contrary of the blessing promised to the obedient. As our Lord promises to the obedient His Father's love, and that "the Father and the Son will come unto him, and make Their abode with him ;" so we must understand Him to tell the disobedient, that he will be hated of the Father, and the Father and the Son will depart from him and leave him to himself. And if the heavenly Inhabitant depart, the Evil spirit will return and dwell there again, with "seven other spirits more wicked than himself ; and the last state of that man will be worse than the first."

I say, this must be very much thought of, because we all, having by Baptism been made members of Jesus Christ, are in danger of bringing on ourselves this worst of evils. We shall certainly do so, if we do not go on humbly and constantly loving and obeying Him *in all things*. It is not our once or twice having had good impressions, and seeming to ourselves to close heartily with the gracious offers and holy commandments of the Lord ; it is not this which will save us, but watchfulness, and constancy, and humility. To judge of the greatness of our danger, consider this which follows. S. Jude, the Apostle, in answer to whose question these gracious promises were made, afterwards, as you know, wrote an epistle : one of those portions of the New Testament, which are supposed to have been written latest, and when there had been sad experience of Christians

forgetting their holy vows, forfeiting God's grace, and falling away for ever. Now throughout this short epistle we find him most earnestly pressing on us, in many and various ways, this one thought: what a thing it must be for a Christian, one brought so very very near to God, to lose himself after all, or be cast away! As the words declaring the unspeakable Gift had doubtless sunk deeply into his heart, when he first heard them pronounced, so he had a deeper sense than others of the unspeakable misery of forfeiting that Gift. The Israelites in the wilderness, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, Korah, and more especially the fallen angels, are mentioned by him as types and examples, to shew us what is thought in heaven of wicked Christians, of disobedient lustful men, who have been joined to our Lord. It is as if he could not find histories or parables dreadful enough to express the greatness of such men's fault, or the horrible punishment which must ensue.

Now when we compare this awful tone of his epistle with the exceeding mercy and condescension of the promise made to him, ought it not to instruct us to fear God more, in proportion as He is more merciful to us? The world, to which Christ hath not manifested Himself, lieth, we know, in wickedness, and will perish for ever; how much more we, to whom He hath come, in whom He vouchsafes to abide, if we go on "feeding ourselves without fear," receiving His tokens without keeping His words!

SERMON XLIV.

THE CHURCH A SPIRITUAL BUILDING.

S. SIMON AND S. JUDE.

1 S. PET. ii. 5.

“Ye also, as living stones, are built up, a spiritual house.”

WE are here assembled, a few out of many worshippers, to adore our Lord and Saviour in thankful remembrance of two of His holy and favoured Apostles: and because we are so few, and so many of those few little able to follow the whole meaning of the service, some from their young years, some from deafness and other infirmities of old age, or from want of instruction when they were young, the whole appearance of our Church on such days may be felt by some as rather disheartening, and they may be tempted to say, Why are such days kept at all? But if, instead of suffering ourselves to be carried away by these outward things, we would seriously turn our thoughts upwards towards God, and inwards towards our own hearts, we should always find in every service something to console us, to help us in the way of peace.

To-day, for example, she teaches us plainly enough

a lesson, which, if we would learn it thoroughly, would cure our misgivings; she teaches us that, in all our holy offices, we are not to think of ourselves as by ourselves, but as we are joined and builded together in one in God's most holy temple and household. We are part of that Church, which is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head Corner Stone. We are not alone, apart, by ourselves; we are, each of us, one of a most glorious company: knit and fastened to Jesus Christ, and through Him to all His saints and Angels. And as the blessing belongs to all, so the way of teaching it, which the Holy Spirit employs, is such as all may easily understand.

Christ's Church is compared, in this collect and in many places of Scripture, to a house or temple in course of building: and as that is a kind of work which most children, from the time they attend to anything, are fond of watching, any child may in this way come to know a good deal of the Holy Catholic Church and of his own blessing in being a member of it.

E. g. any child may see that, when a house is being built, the masons are very particular in choosing out the stones that are to stand at the angles or corners, and bind the two walls or sides of the building together. The corner or coin-stones, especially that of the foundation, are the most important in the whole building. If they are once well chosen in the first place, and then carefully formed and shaped, fixed in the right place, and in every respect prepared to have the other stones above and on each side properly cemented to them: this is a

great point towards the perfection of the building. Now the Scriptures tell us, that Jesus Christ Himself is the Head Corner Stone of the Christian building, the Church. When therefore we see any builders so carefully placing, as they do by line and plummet, the coin-stones of the building, especially that one which is in the foundation; we are to think of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God and Man, Who has condescended to be made the Corner Stone of God's holy Church and temple; to have it all founded on Him, and to tie and bind all together. He is the Stone set at nought of the builders, but now made the Head of the corner. The Jews, especially the chief priests and Pharisees, rejected Him, and would have had Him left out of the building: but the power and Providence of God in raising Him from the dead set Him high above all. Next, as there are, in the foundation of a building, other stones besides the corner stone, so in this holy and heavenly and spiritual house, though there can be no other foundation but Christ only, yet the Apostles and prophets are, in some mysterious way, part of the foundation too, united as they are and joined closely to Him, true parts and members of Him. So to-day's collect tells us, out of the epistle to the Ephesians: "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone."

Now as we see in the largest and handsomest buildings, that some of the foundations are out of

* Eph. ii. 19, 20.

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sight, some appear above the ground, round the base of the building: so it is with the foundations of this heavenly Building also: it stands upon the prophets as well as upon the Apostles. Now the prophets are like foundation-stones out of sight: they are unseen members of Christ: they had passed into the heavenly and invisible world, before they had been joined to Him, and we know not exactly how they are so: whereas the Apostles were openly chosen by Himself to be next Him, and so that through them life and grace might pass from Him to all believers: and as the foundation was, so the building continues: part of it is visible, consisting of those Christians who are from time to time living in the world, and part, the far greater part, invisible, those namely who have from time to time been gathered into paradise, and, having been made His members, are now awaiting the day of His return to take all finally to Himself. So far then you see plainly how the work of a builder may put us in mind of God's Church: there is the Corner or Head-stone, i. e. Jesus Christ: there are other foundation-stones, viz. the Apostles and prophets, those believers who were next to Him: and of these, some, the Apostles, were, as it were, above ground and visible; all might see their connexion with the building: others, the prophets, were not part of the building, until after they had ceased to be in sight of men: their Christian communion began in the other world.

The foundations being thus laid, the builder goes on to choose out other stones, and to add them one after another to the building, shaping them at his will, and using what mortar or cement he thinks

best: and so the whole goes on, gradually growing higher and higher, till it have attained its full measure. Now this is what we see daily going on, as believers are added unto the Lord in Holy Baptism: every one of them is a fresh stone added to the sacred temple, which is to go on increasing, until it have reached the full greatness and beauty, which He intended from the beginning. Only there is this difference between the building we are speaking of, and all others, that in this all the stones are living: they are the souls and bodies of men, redeemed by Christ and quickened by His Spirit dwelling in them. Therefore S. Peter in the text says, "Ye also, as lively or living stones, are builded up a spiritual house:" and our Lord in the book of Revelations promises to make such as overcome the world, pillars in the temple of God. And these stones are quickened, and have the heavenly life put in them, by touch of the Corner-Stone, Jesus Christ, as S. Peter again signifies in the text: for he says, that on "coming unto Christ as to a living stone, we also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Virtue oes out of Jesus Christ in Baptism, to make us members of Him; to give us life, whereas, before, we were dead. As long as we are joined to Christ, as long as we have a place in His Church, so long we have life from Him; no longer.

Now we know what it is, which keeps the stones together, and in their places, in a visible outward building: it is the mortar, or other cement, in which they are set. And the Scripture seems to teach us, that this answers to the true doctrine or faith of Jesus Christ. True faith is that, by which we con-

tinue to be justified: we go on joined together in unity of spirit by the doctrine of the Apostles. And on the other hand, when any one teaches false faith, bad doctrines, such as the Evil one too easily persuades people to receive, in order to have some sort of excuse for their careless lives; this in the prophet is compared to building a wall with untempered mortar. So Ezekiel reproves the false prophets and prophetesses of his time. One, he says, builded a wall, and the others daubed it with untempered mortar: that is, as he explains it in the same place, “^b With lies they made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God had not made sad; and strengthened the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way, by promising him life.” Thus as the Apostles’ doctrine is what binds together the several members of the Church, so the untempered mortar, the false and sensual doctrine of the heretics, will soon fall to pieces, and separate those who seemed united.

What we are however to observe most particularly is, that the whole of this building forms a temple: “Ye are builded up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood: ye are builded up in Christ, an habitation of God through the Spirit.” It is a temple, the temple of God, because the Spirit of God dwells in it.

Yet as the stones in any temple, or in any building whatever, are not all of the same pattern, nor all fit for the same part of the building, so there is a great difference in different Christians, in their stations, their gifts, and their characters, according to the part of His Church in which the Almighty purposes employing them. One stone does not envy

^b Ezek. xiii. 22.

another, nor seek to rise higher in the building than the workman has ordained its place, nor to be cut out into a more ornamental form than it has. So should it be among Christians: "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace:" there should be no such thing heard of among them as strife or pride, or vain-glory, "but in lowliness of mind each should esteem other better than himself."

If Christians, the living stones of God's temple, sincerely try to keep this commandment: if neither by false doctrine nor unholy and unkind practice do they break themselves off from the mystical Body of Christ: this is the great reward offered them: they shall not only continue in that union with our Lord which they now have, but they, together with the whole divine building of which they are parts, shall be taken up to heaven, and changed into precious stones: as we read in the Revelations, that the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, which had in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, were seen in S. John's glorious vision, as so many precious stones: even as the gates seemed so many pearls, and the streets of pure gold.

On the other hand, should any one of those living stones behave itself unworthy of the heavenly life, grudging and disputing against the other stones, or otherwise perversely resisting the Builder's will: that will most assuredly happen to it, which any earthly architect would order to be done in any earthly building, with what proved to be bad materials: such stones will be taken out, as unworthy to stay in the building; they will be cast down and broken in pieces, and their place supplied by other

worthier stones, such as may know and love their own part in the building, and not reject the heavenly life, still offered to them by continual union with the Corner-Stone, Jesus Christ.

I have now gone through a few of the particulars of that famous Scripture parable, which compares the Church and the kingdom of God to a house or temple: and I see no reason whatever, why a person who cannot at all read may not soon understand a great deal of the nature of that Church, and of his own duties accordingly, by just watching what goes on in builders' work. Who is so ignorant that he cannot understand how as our buildings are kept together by the coin-stone, so is the Church by Jesus Christ, from Whom virtue goes out through His Apostles to transform into His own likeness, and keep close to Himself, every soul who casts not His mercy away? Who does not understand that this Church, being partly visible and partly invisible, is builded upon the foundation of the prophets as well as the Apostles, the Church before Christ as well as the Church after Him? Who does not see what a gift, what a privilege it is that, let him be as poor and insignificant as he may in this present world, yet as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, as a living stone, joined by faith to Christ Jesus, he is in a far higher place than this earth can give?

My brethren, it is our own condition: we are members of Christ, stones in that holy temple, which is before long to be taken up into heaven, and when we come here, be we many or few, whether the place look forlorn or no, we are claiming and exercising this highest of privileges. So it is in the sight of

the holy Angels: how sad to think that while they are looking on, rejoicing to see us lifted up so near to themselves, we should be taken up with such low mean unworthy thoughts as we too often are: full of childish cares and earthly fancies which will pass away the next moment; discontented and fretful about our bodily maintenance: weary perhaps of being here so long, and letting our thoughts wander this way and that, without any particular shame and self-reproach for our heartless unthankful behaviour to so great a Benefactor. May it please Him to open our eyes, that we may understand, and not say only, Whose we are and Whom we serve: who are around us, and to whom we are mysteriously joined! For until we have somewhat like a right notion of what He has done for us already, we shall never prepare ourselves worthily for the greater blessings which He has yet in store: and so in the end will be taken from us even that which we already have.

SERMON XLV.

HOW THE SIMPLEST AND THE POOREST MAY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH.

S. SIMON AND S. JUDE.

S. JUDE 3.

*“That ye should earnestly contend for the faith
which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

S. JUDE is the brother of S. James, and S. James is called the brother of our Lord: i. e. most likely his first cousin: therefore S. Jude was in the same near relation to Him; and so perhaps was S. Simon also: as we read of four who were called Christ's brethren at Nazareth. James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas*. We seem therefore in this day's service to be brought near to our Blessed Lord, as He was in those long days of silence and humiliation, when He was content to be known only as the Carpenter the Son of Mary. We are introduced to two of those who were His companions, and most likely worked and refreshed themselves with Him: and now they are His Apostles, filled with His Spirit, and one of them, S. Jude, comes to us with a message from Him.

Now, my brethren, would you not look and listen very earnestly, if you could see with your eyes and

* S. Matt. xiii. 55.

hear with your ears one whom you knew to be so nearly akin to Jesus Christ, His own first cousin by His Mother Mary's side; so near as to be called His brother; would it not make you very attentive if you saw and heard such an one drawing near to you, to look at you individually, to say words which Christ had commanded him to say to you? Yes, surely, you could not help attending to them, you are not any of you such daring unbelievers. Take notice then that such is really the case. The epistle which you just now heard, the epistle of S. Jude, is all one as if he, the Lord's brother, were present with you bodily uttering the same words. And he spake by the Holy Ghost; there could be no mistake in his words: so much the more inexcusable you and I and each one of this Christian congregation, if we do not with our hearts really regard and obey the message sent us by S. Jude.

What is that message? It is just this which I read to you, "That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints:" i. e. that we all, as Christians, should think very much of the holy Faith or Creed, in which we and all the saints, all Christ's people, from the beginning are baptized. We are to be very jealous for it, as the prophet Elijah was jealous for the Lord God of hosts: if any one says a word against it, we are earnestly to stand up *for* it, and not part with one jot or tittle of it, nor, if we can help it, suffer any one belonging to us to part with it, for any consideration whatever. This is the message which our Lord sends us on His brother's own day: He sends it not to the learned only, nor to those only who are of quick un-

derstanding, but to all Christians, all who have been baptized; not to those of one particular time or of one particular country, but to all: for this epistle is one of those called Catholic, or universal, addressed to the whole Church, not as S. Paul's, to the Christians of some particular place, such as Rome, Corinth, or Ephesus. So the first verse gives us to understand. "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James"—he might have described himself as the Scripture elsewhere describes him, "the brother of Jesus Christ," but in his humility he calls himself but His servant; Jude, I say, the servant of Christ, writes in his Master's Name "to them that are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ," i. e. kept by His watchful care and guardianship, as a city is kept by its garrison, so as to continue members of Him, and so are really called, called unto Him; called by His Name: i. e. to all Christians S. Jude writes. And why does he write? He was moved by the Holy Ghost: for so it was with all the Apostles. Their letters as well as their sermons and conversations on matters of faith and religion were not their own but their Lord's: even as He Himself had promised: "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." Well, this blessed Spirit wrought so in the heart of the holy S. Jude, that he could not keep silence; he could but set himself with all diligence to write something to be read and heard by all Christians alike, as we now have read and heard it on this day, the day of his martyrdom. It was to be for all alike; for it was to speak of the "common salvation," i. e. of God's work in saving souls, which is "common," the same for one soul as for another, the same now

as on the day of Pentecost. “^b One Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ^c.” This is the common salvation, whereof, when S. Jude set himself to write, he found that he must speak of the duty of contending for it. Things were come to that pass, that it was not enough to tell people to believe rightly and persevere in this belief, but they were also to strive for it earnestly, to fight and contend for it, to be in pain and anxiety about it. Our Lord had told His disciples while He was yet with them, “I came not to send peace but a sword. For from this time there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father^d; and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household^e.” Our Lord meant this in part of the disturbance which it would make in heathen or Jewish families, when here one and there another were willing to be converted and follow Christ: but He spake also no doubt of the sad strifes and separations which would arise among us who profess and call ourselves Christians, of which we see so much; one part of Christendom divided against another; sects and parties by hundreds, each one claiming to have the true Gospel; so that it is come to be in many places almost as it was in the time of which it is written^f, “In those days there was no king in

^b Eph. iv. 4—6. ^c 1 Cor. iii. 11. ^d S. Luke xii. 52, 53.

^e S. Matt. x. 36. ^f Judges xvii. 6.

Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." S. Jude saw the beginning of all this, and knew by the Holy Ghost, what the end of it would be, even that of which our Saviour warned us, saying, "¶ When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the Faith on the earth?" S. Jude therefore could not be quiet; it was needful for him to write; a strong necessity was laid upon him, and he lifted up his voice like a trumpet and uttered unto the men of his own time and to all generations of Christians, and to us among the rest, the mind of the Holy Ghost upon this great and dangerous matter. And what is the mind of the Holy Ghost? How are the people of God to pass unharmed through the sad confusions and quarrels of the time? Does he say, "sincerity is all in all: it matters not whether people agree, provided each thinks himself in the right?" Does he say, "mutual forbearance, toleration and gentleness are all in all; the matter of religion is too hard, too far out of our reach, for you or me to know really what is *true*: it will be enough if we 'agree to differ,' each one letting the other alone?" Does he say, "the quiet and order of society, the outward peace and comfort of this life is all in all: do your best for that, and let doctrine alone?" Does he say, "charity and good works, *that* is what God Almighty cares for: do good and love one another, that is all in all: belief signifies but little in comparison?" No, my brethren, the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the Apostle says none of these things, but what He does say is, "since there are such divisions, do you earnestly contend for the Faith." Not that He would have us

¶ S. Luke xviii. 8.

make light of sincerity, toleration, peace, morality, and charity : God forbid : all these are fruits of the Spirit, and where the true Faith is truly held by God's grace, all these are sure to be found : but none of these nor all of them together, are the appointed remedy for our sad divisions : that is only to be found in the Faith, the true belief, earnestly and charitably held and contended for.

But a man may say, How am I to know the true Faith ? and this also the Apostle tells us plainly. It is that which was once delivered unto the saints, i. e. as another great teacher and friend of Jesus Christ explains it, "the true Faith is that, which was from the beginning : that which the Apostles heard from their Lord Himself, which they saw with their eyes, which they looked upon, and their hands were permitted to handle, of the Word of life:" that, which accordingly they taught first in Creeds and afterwards set down in their Gospels and epistles concerning Him. That is it, for which we are to contend. The Apostles' Creed, that no doubt is the Apostles' Faith ; the Creeds of the Church, they no doubt are the Faith of the Church. If you are at a loss about the sense of Scripture, in any great and necessary matter, the Creeds of the Church declare it unto you : and if you want to be assured that the Creeds of the Church declare the same which the Apostles did, you may compare them with what the same Apostles wrote down for your learning in the Holy Scriptures. And this Gospel delivered in the Creed and Scriptures to the Church by the Apostles was delivered as S. Jude says *once* : i. e. to say, once for all. There never was since, there never can be, any new, any other

Gospel. They who teach any other, the sentence of the Holy Ghost is, "Let them be accursed." For S. Paul writes, "Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." He repeats it over again, that there may be no mistake: "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Doubt ye not therefore, brethren, but earnestly believe, that in the holy Prayer-book, in its Creeds and services, you have the true Gospel of Christ, the Faith once for all delivered to the Christians. Whatever else is right or wrong, be sure it must be right for you to keep to that good thing, which our Lord has thus committed to your trust. Let nothing tempt you to swerve from it, either to the right hand or to the left. In this faith we have been called, in this by His mercy we have been kept hitherto: here we will live, and here, if it so please Him, we desire to die.

But our Lord and Saviour wants more of us than merely not to forsake our Faith. His message, His serious message by the Apostle is, "Contend for it:" which I understand to mean, "Be very much in earnest about it, strive with all your might, strain every nerve, to be perfect in it and make others perfect also." He does not mean, far from it, that we should be always arguing and disputing about holy things; far less that we should quarrel with one another, and bear malice, because we are not all of the same faith: but this, my brethren, is what He expects of you, who by His special favour have been brought up to believe the Bible and use the Prayer-book. He expects you to be altogether, with all your heart, on

the side of the Faith which is taught in the Creeds : to confess it before God, and praise Him for it day and night : to watch over it as the most precious of all treasures, and to be very jealous of every thought word and deed, in yourself and in any other, which in any way tends to contradict or dishonour that Faith. He expects every Christian in his degree to be like the holy Angels, who watch with all the desire of their souls, how the cause of Christ, the kingdom of heaven, is prospering and spreading here on earth : who rejoice over one sinner that repenteth, and, with a holy zeal, fight against the dragon and his angels in behalf of their brethren of mankind. His will is, that each little Christian child should be so taught the blessed Creed of the Church in his very young days, that he should never fail to say it with his prayers to God. Night and morning, if the Church had her way, the Creed which we learn at Baptism, or else that other Creed which we sing at Holy Communion, would form part of our devotions. True, the Creed is not a prayer : but in a Christian's devotion there are things, besides direct prayer, to be offered to God. We are bound to praise Him as well as pray to Him : we are bound to thank Him for past mercies, as well as to depend on Him for mercies to come. Now the Creed is a high act of praise and thanksgiving : if you put your mind to it, it is from beginning to end an acknowledgement of the great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, how great He is in Himself, and how great things He has done for us. When you say or sing the Creed in earnest, it is as truly a Hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God ; as, when you join with all your heart in chanting the *Te Deum* or any of the psalms of praise.

Here then is one principal way, in which every Christian, even the poorest, even those of you who cannot read, may fulfil Christ's message sent to us this day by His Apostle S. Jude, and may set himself with all his heart on the side of that Faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints. Consider only what great things the words of the Belief mean, and how surely those great things appertain to each one of us, if we do not throw them away : even as the catechism instructs us to say, "He made *me* and all the world; He redeemed *me* and all mankind: He sanctifieth *me* and all the elect people of God." Use yourselves, dear brethren, when you say, "I believe," (be it privately in your own devotions or publicly with your brethren in Church,) use yourselves to bring each saying of it home to your own souls, to your own hearts. Think earnestly: and be not afraid to do so, for it is no more than the plain truth, "This Holy Father, Who made me at first, is with me and supports me every moment; every moment His searching Eye is on me, is watching the secrets of my heart: This Jesus Who died, died for me; for me, though He knew beforehand all my sins; He died for me then, and is now pleading for me in heaven: and very soon I shall see Him here with my eyes, and know whether I have cast away His mercy or no: This Holy Spirit has entered into my very own soul and body, to convert or condemn me, as I myself shall choose; and which it is to be, I shall very soon know for ever." When you practise such thoughts as these, my brethren; when you pray for grace to help you to do so, then you are earnestly contending for the faith: you are striving against the world, the flesh, and the devil on behalf of Christ's

Truth: you may very humbly, but very cheerfully hope that what you are about, will do you good for ever, that the Father is well pleased with it, and accepts it graciously for His Son's sake.

I will just mention one other holy practice, which must be added to this right use of the Creed, if you would fully and really keep the rule of earnestly striving for the Faith: you must do what you can, to promote God's kingdom over all. You cannot yourself love and honour Him as a Father, without wishing that all your brethren, who are His children as well as you, should love and honour Him likewise. You cannot truly cling to Christ as your Redeemer, you cannot welcome the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier, without longing that others may do the like. In this sense, Christ expects you to strive for the Faith, namely, by doing what you can (and you can all do more or less) towards the conversion and amendment of your brethren. He expects you to give something; the poor widow to give her mite, the rich man to give a great deal, towards the propagation of His Gospel. If you are indifferent to that, how vain for you to imagine, that you are in any way really striving for the Faith! I do hope, my brethren, that, by the end of next year at least, there will be few, if any in this congregation who are not in a way of regularly sparing so much a year for missionary work. And I advise all who can, to begin at once. Why should you delay? It is but lessening your treasure. Why should you be lukewarm? It is much happier to be zealous. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "He that is not with Me is against Me."

F f

SERMON XLVI,

ALL CHRISTIANS CALLED TO BE SAINTS.

ALL SAINTS, DAY.

S. MATT. v. 48.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

WE must all be saints: there is no doubt of that. The Holy Ghost, by S. Paul, tells us so in almost every epistle. The Christians of Rome, of Corinth, of Ephesus, of Philippi, of Colosse, were “called to be saints,” and are written to as saints, just because they were Christians: and for exactly the same reason the holy Apostle, had he lived in our time and had been writing to us, might have said, “To all that live in England, beloved of God, called to be saints; To the Church of God which is in Winchester, with all the saints which are in all Hampshire; To the saints which are in London, or any other city of Christendom, and the faithful in Christ Jesus.” There is no question of it. According to Scripture, Almighty God expects it of us all: men, women and children, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, that we should, one and all, be saints.

But is not this a very hard saying? inasmuch as every one knows the word Saint, to be a very great and high word, and that when we call a man a saint, we mean that we suppose him to be unusually good and holy, to have Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, far more perfectly than the generality of Christians have. So the Church teaches us to think of S. Paul, S. John, S. Augustine, S. Chrysostome and the rest, as of brighter stars in the spiritual heaven, where, as we are plainly told, “^a one star differeth from another star in glory.” “What then,” some of you may think in his heart: “are we expected to be all of the very brightest; to be so many S. Pauls and S. Johns; every Christian woman to be such as the blessed Virgin Mary; every penitent, like Mary Magdalen; every young man, like S. Stephen; and so of the rest?” Yes, my brethren, all this *is* expected of you. God Almighty requires and demands it of each one of you; not that you should actually attain to all this here on earth, but that you should set it before you as your pattern, and try for it, and be always working towards it as well as you can, so that by His mercy you may come to it entirely hereafter. Something in the same way as, when you set a workman any task, any piece of work, you know very well that there is an immense difference in skill and strength and activity between one and another, but still you expect and require of each one that he should aim after perfection in his work, that he should intend and try to do it, as well as ever it can be done. And if this be not his mind and his way, you consider him as, so far, falling short of the cha-

^a 1 Cor. xv. 41.

racter of a thoroughly good artizan or labourer, or whatever his line of work may be. So it is in the works of God, the tasks which He from time to time sets you to do, as believers in Him Whom He hath sent. You are to strive and pray and labour to do each one of those works, as you believe the blessed Virgin Mary, or S. John, or any other great saint, would have done it.

Is this too much to ask of you? Nay, my brethren, it cannot be too much; for the Word of God calls on you for more even than this: much more, infinitely more. Did you not hear just now what our Lord said to you, to every one, the most ordinary among you, (for observe, He said it, not indeed to the multitude, but to all His disciples)? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Not the saints, but the God of the saints, does our Lord set before you as your pattern. He is infinitely perfect: all inward brightness, purity, goodness, holiness, all truth and all love are with Him and from Him, in a degree and way which no thought of ours can reach: and *that* always, for ever and ever: and yet we are bid to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. Not as though we could come up to Him: no one is so senseless as to imagine that: but as He is always, and does always, that which is the very best in itself, so we are to aim at being always and doing always the very best that we can attain to, or think of. What He tells us of Himself, that we are to set before us as our standard and pattern, and not to be contented with ourselves, until we and our doings are in conformity with Him.

This rule He gives in the Sermon on the Mount, with regard especially to the forgiving and loving our enemies: and all Christians, in words and profession, are commonly forward enough to acknowledge it. "It hath been said" (not in Scripture but by some of your teachers), "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." That is, "You are to follow the example of your heavenly Father, Who not only bears with you, but feeds you and provides for you all this time, in spite of your many sins: Who gives sunshine and rain to His very worst enemies. You are to be like Him, in forgiving, loving, praying for, every one without exception, though he have used you, or any one who is near to you, ever so ill. You are to do this, in order that you may be like Him, Who loved His crucifiers so well as to die for them. You are to be as perfect in it as ever you can: for never never can you come up to your pattern."

So our Divine Preacher has instructed us concerning the duty of forgiving love: and we must understand it of all other parts of goodness and holiness. Not in forgiving only, but in giving, and loving, and praying, and watching, and suffering, and every kind of virtue, our Lord and our God in the Person of Christ Jesus "hath left us an example that ye should follow His steps:" and to follow Him, is to be a saint. As a little child learns to walk and to speak by trying to do the same that its elders are doing, so we

are to learn holiness by constantly endeavouring, how faintly and rudely soever, to be followers of Him. You perceive how foolish and wrong it would be, if an infant could understand and reason, to say to it, "What is the use of your trying to walk and talk like that grown-up person? You cannot do it: you might as well let it alone." You would never say so to a child, because you know, it would be the way to keep the child from ever coming to the use of its tongue and limbs. Beware then of indulging the thought, "It is too much, trying to follow the great and holy doings of Christ and His saints: it will be enough for me to be like the good people about me, the respectable, Church-going Christians of this or that place." My brethren, this will never do. For consider: you are to be perfect, as Christ is perfect. You are to be "followers of the saints, as they were of Christ." How did the saints follow Christ? Surely by keeping hold of Him: by recollecting from morning to night, in little things and in great, Whose they were, and Whom they served: by wishing and contriving and praying, not so much how to do great and extraordinary things, as how to do little and ordinary things extraordinarily well. Plainly, this is the right and true way: for the great things come to few persons, and only now and then, but the ordinary and common trials come every day and hour, and fill up your whole life. O cast yourself constantly upon Christ in these ordinary trials and temptations, and see whether He will not deliver you in those which are more fearful and agonizing. How did the saints of the Old Testament endure to be stoned and sawn asunder, and to go through all the torment and

affliction which you heard of just now in the second lesson? Because they had used themselves to live by faith, to remember the promises which God had given them, to look in all things to Him Whom they could not yet see. Daniel was trained for the den of lions, by the prayers which he offered on his knees before his God three times a day. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were trained for the burning fiery furnace by their rule of not indulging their bodily appetites with the portion of the heathen king's meat, and the wine which he drank. Being thus practised in denying their bodies for God's sake, they were the more helped by God's grace to give those bodies to the fire rather than worship the golden image. The holy Stephen was prepared to look stedfastly up to heaven, and call upon Jesus in his martyrdom, by the life of faith which he had led before; for he was "full of faith, of the Holy Ghost and of power," and his looking stedfastly towards heaven in his death was but the continuance of what he had been used to, all through his Christian life.

By such examples as these, my brethren, you may understand how our Father in heaven has put it in the power of every one of you to be perfect, if you will, as He is perfect: how you are all called to be saints, just as truly so as if, like the Apostles you had to preach the Gospel, and prove it by working miracles and suffering martyrdom. One thing and one only is needful—a continual earnest good-will to please Christ in every thing for the love of Him Who first loved you so dearly. Recollect what He told you just now in the Gospel for this good day: what precious promises, and to what sort of persons

He uttered them. Blessed are they—He does not say, who work miracles, who speak prophecies, who understand parables, who convert whole nations by their eloquence; but, “the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Those are the blessed, the perfect, the saints of God: do thou sincerely and with all thy heart pray for and practise those holy tempers, and thou too shall be in God’s sight a saint, blessed and perfect.

“In God’s sight a saint! blessed and perfect before Him!” What can be said or thought more? O my brethren, who can imagine the deep, the holy, the divine joy! to know that you are accounted faithful by Him Who tries the reins and the hearts! how unlike the vain deceitful intoxicating dreams of those who are praised by men and delight in it! Well might holy men of old, confessing their sins to God, cry out and say, “I will no more desire, I will no more suffer, I will no more seek, I will no more be moved by, the praises of men; for behold, they speak but they know nothing; Thou art silent, but Thou knowest all things.” Well might they hide their faces, and look on to the day when He, Who knows the secrets of our hearts, will come and proclaim them, and they shall be secrets no longer. And so much the more transporting will be the joy, when, beside and beyond their expectation, the Judge shall say, “^b Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” They will answer and say, “when

^b S. Matt. xxv. 23, 34.

did we any thing for Thee ? ” But He will even force them to go up higher. Thus shall it be in the day, when the Lord our God shall be revealed, and all His saints with Him. They shall be His in the day when He shall make up His jewels, when He shall take account of His own peculiar treasure, and set each precious stone, each holy and glorified spirit, in its own home, which He is now preparing for it on high. Then, they shall be saints and know themselves to be so : perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect. But while we are here, my brethren, the Almighty in His wisdom and love keeps our eternal home hidden from us. There is, as it were, a twilight around us, that we may order our steps more humbly and warily. But if you be dutiful to our Lord, you will find that you are walking in a morning not in an evening twilight. Your path will be that of the just, “^cas a shining light, which brighteneth more and more unto the perfect day.” Christ in Whom you have believed, Whom you constantly try to love and obey, He will be your Hope, a hope that maketh not ashamed. What if you see Him not as yet ? What, if at times, when temptation is strong, and you feel yourself very weak, and it comes into your mind that you are called to be a saint, and that the Judge bids you to be perfect ; what if your heart should sink within you, to think of such words as saintliness and perfection, in comparison with your own state and doings ? Yet be of good cheer ; if you are trying, really trying to fear and obey Him, you are His, and He will not only save you at last, but will spare you now : for His word is, “^dThey shall be Mine, saith

^c Prov. iv. 18.

^d Mal. iii. 17.

the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels : and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." He will spare you, i. e. He will deal gently with you, He will lay no more upon you than He will make you able to bear. He will proportion your trials to your strength, in the way that He knows to be best, not only for your escaping damnation, but also for the increase of your reward. When you in your frailty are inclined to linger, or even to turn back to the world, He will lay hold of your hand (as the Angel did of Lot's, "the Lord being merciful unto him"), and with His loving correction He will save you from yourself. He will be to you, it is His own word, as a Father to a son that serveth him. Think for a moment what that means. If any one of you that is a father should have hard work to be done, and a son old enough to work for him, how careful, of course, will he be to spare that son, not to deal roughly and harshly with him, not to make his task or his burden too heavy, to encourage and help him in all reasonable ways ! Thus a loving father will spare a son that serveth him : and our Lord, you see, promises you the same kind of help, if you will but try in earnest to serve Him faithfully in your Christian calling : which calling is, to train yourself up to be a saint.

The promise is for you, for me, for us all. Why should there be one among you not found partaker of its benefit ? "In My Father's house," says our Lord, "are many mansions*:" "there is room enough and glory enough, for all who are bidden, if only they will come in." Why should any one here be

* S. John xiv. 2.

absent? In the Lamb's treasure-house, there is a crown and a robe prepared for you to claim, if you be not found unworthy : or rather, the robe is already given : given in Baptism : if you have kept it clean, as a wedding-garment ought to be kept, the crown will in due time be yours also. And remember, whom you will meet there, whom you will see face to ~~face~~, not only all the holy men of old, who are in the hearts of all good Christians, but your own friends and kindred too, as many as have fallen asleep in the Lord ; all saints now, and all perfect, though some are called up higher than others. A great company of dear ones is waiting for you : do not disappoint them : do not scorn their love ; do not cast yourself into the arms of your and their unpitying enemy. As yet the choice is allowed you : choose life, choose saintliness, choose perfection, while you may. Go home and pray for grace to do so : pray our Lord so to turn your hearts that to please Him may be always your chief care. Ask this earnestly in the name of Christ. He has pledged Himself that you will not ask in vain.

SERMON XLVII.

THE GLORY OF THE SAINTS.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

Ps. cxlix. 9.

“Such honour have all His Saints.”

THERE are two words in the Old and New Testament, as they were originally written, which are expressed in the English Version by the one word saints: the one which means properly Holy, pure and high, and separate from all things else; and this is the word which is applied to the most high Nature of Almighty God Himself; as when the Cherubim and Seraphim cry one to another, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts.” Whereas the other word seems to bring with it the thought of tender and especial affection too. It is the word applied to the Incarnate Son of God, where it is said, “^aThou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption:” and from Him the title is derived and flows, as it were, down to His beloved ones on earth: as when the psalmist says, “^bPreserve Thou my soul, for I am holy:” and in that most heavenly psalm of praise, the hundred and forty-fifth: “All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee: they shew the glory of Thy kingdom and talk of Thy power: that Thy power,

^a Ps. xvi. 11.

^b Ib. lxxxvi. 2.

Thy glory, and the mightiness of Thy kingdom, might be known unto men." One of the two words then seems rather to refer to the glorious yet awful privileges of all, whom God has chosen to be a people to Himself, the other to the especial love with which He regards such as make a right use of those privileges. Accordingly the word saints, which in our English answers to both these, has two somewhat distinct meanings: sometimes it stands for all Christians, all whom God's Holy Spirit has marked and taken out of the world to be Christ's own, sometimes for those who in an especial manner have laid hold of that glorious privilege, clung to it, brought it home to themselves, lived and died in the constant endeavour to get the perfect victory over sin, and live, as nearly as they might, the life of the very Angels on earth. It is in this sense chiefly, I imagine, that the word saints is used when we speak of this day's festival. The collect indeed seems to guide us to this sense of the word: for, after speaking of the whole body of Christ's chosen and privileged ones as the Elect, it changes its word, and speaks of those whom we are to follow, and with whom we would choose our portion, as the Saints. After acknowledging that Almighty God hath "knit together all His elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of His Son Christ our Lord," it prays that we may follow, not all the elect, but the saints, in such virtuous and godly living, as may bring us to their unspeakable joys, how lowly soever we may be placed beneath the footstool of the lowest of them. Here are plainly enough to be seen the two senses of the word saint in our Bibles. Sometimes it means merely one of the elect, one of those chosen to be a

member of Christ's Body ; sometimes, one of those who so follow after perfection, as to obtain a crown of their own beyond that of ordinary believers. The collect then signifies that, when we talk of All Saints Day, we do not mean that we then honour the memory of all dead Christians whatever, though all, in one sense, are saints : but we mean those who were rare and glorious in their holiness, those whom the Church in all times has marked as God's dearest children by adding the word Saint before their names in speaking of them. All such, being more in number than could in any wise be commemorated separately, the Church has gathered into one feast, wherein, while we devoutly praise God for them on earth, we may piously hope that they remember us and pray for us in paradise.

Now the psalm, of which the text is the conclusion, being throughout a hymn in honour of God, as the God of all saints, uses that one of the two words, which, as I just now said, most expresses God's tender regard for those holy ones, and their being, in heart and life, as well as in privilege, true brethren of Him Who could not see corruption. This being so, it is very remarkable to see what kind of honour, we are here told, is prepared for them, and by what course of conduct they are to obtain it.

First of all, they are described as meek-hearted : the way to that highest glory is to be very very quiet and humble. "The Lord hath pleasure in His people : He will beautify the meek with salvation." Others He may save, but these He will beautify with salvation ; there will be a special honour and glory, like a crown of triumph, added to their eternal reward. Why ? Because they were meek upon earth :

they took joyfully reproaches and wrongs and spoilings and neglect, if so be they might lay closer hold upon His Cross, Who “^cgave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: Who hid not His face from shame and spitting.” How glad then ought we to be, when any one affronts or vexes us, and does us wrong! instead of being sullen and displeased, or bitter and violent, one or other of which is too regularly our case.

The next verses go on to describe more exactly the beauty and brightness of the saints’ marvellous salvation. “Let the saints be joyful with glory, let them sing aloud upon their beds.” They are to be filled with all joy and glory; but how? Not as the honoured ones of this world, with a great noise and show of outward things, but they shall rejoice and “sing aloud upon their beds.” This may put us in mind of holy Job’s saying, where he praises God for “giving songs in the night^d.” It seems to say that one great privilege of the saints, one also of the principal ways in which Almighty God prepares them for the great works which He has for them to do, is the putting good thoughts and good words into their minds in quiet and secret, when they are alone and unemployed, or lying awake upon their beds. Perhaps they are in pain or in care: their sick bodies or weary and anxious spirits would fain distract them and quite disturb their thoughts: but He is near them and enables them to think of all His works, and have their meditation of His doings: “they remember the works of the Lord; and call to mind His wonders of old time^e:” thus, even in the deeps of affliction

^c Isa. l. 6.^d Job xxxv. 10.^e Ps. lxxvii. 11. cxliii. 5.

they rejoice in their beds, and have the high praises of God in their mouth. It is His reward to them, for that in other times, when they were at ease and in health, and might in a manner choose what to think of, they kept their wandering minds in order, and instead of dreaming of the world and its vanities, or letting themselves be carried away towards sinful pleasures, they "thought upon God's Name in the night-season, and kept His law in their hearts: they rose at midnight to give thanks unto Him, because of His righteous judgements: their eyes prevented the night-watches, that they might be occupied in His law¹." This power of holy meditation was itself the saints' reward for their chaste and obedient conduct abroad in the world: if they thought on God's Name in the night-season, and kept His law, it was because in the daytime, both in their work and in their play, they had striven to keep His commandments: and again, if they were enabled in any way to utter His high praises and to rejoice on their beds before Him, this again was part of the crown and recompense of their diligence in holy meditation. Purity, thoughtfulness, joy in the Lord, these were the three first steps, so to call them, of the ladder by which God was guiding them upwards. And being thus inwardly prepared, they issued forth, in the whole armour of God, to do His work in the world, as He by His grace and providence might appoint them. With the high praises of God, which they had thus been secretly practising, in their mouths, and with a two-edged sword in their hands, they go forth, as the remainder of the psalm describes them, "to be avenged of the

¹ Ps. cxix. 55, 62, 148.

heathen and to rebuke the people: to bind their kings in chains and their nobles in links of iron: that they may execute on them the judgement that is written."

Here we have a picture of the great war which is for ever going on between our Lord Christ and His saints on the one hand, and this present evil world on the other. As warriors go out to battle with music and songs of encouragement, so the saints go out into the world with the high praises of God in their mouth: i.e. they carry about with them the remembrance of the holy psalms and hymns, which they have learned in their youth and practised on their beds; they have always something to say to themselves, when temptation comes near them: and what they say to others, even when they are not directly thinking of it, turns out to the high praise of God. More especially have they proved mighty to win souls to God by the glorious and beautiful effect of their high praises of Him in His solemn worship: as S. Paul describes the Christian assemblies in his time. "When all prophesy," i.e. when all are engaged in offering to God the service of solemn psalms or hymns, "and there come in an unlearned man or an unbeliever, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all;" he feels that they have some great secret of God among them, which he must partake of, in order to go the right way: "and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest:" he is brought to humble religious confession of his sins, "and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth^f."

^f 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

Thus the high praises of God in the mouths of the saints have always had great power, to do His work in overcoming the world : and besides, they have had His two-edged sword in their hands. What is this two-edged sword ? The same, as it seems, which S. John in his vision saw coming out of the mouth of the Son of Man, when He appeared to him in His glory, with which Christ declared that He would fight against the false-teachers, and with which His enemies shall be slain, when He finally prevails^s. S. Paul tells us what this sword is : it is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," therefore it is represented as coming out of Christ's mouth. Why has this sword two edges ? Because the Word of God, His revealed Will in the Church and the Scriptures, does, as it were, cut on both sides : it speaks to our hearts in two ways, having both temporal and eternal woes, both the promise of this life and of that which is to come. And inasmuch as the saints bear this word in their hands, whereas He, Who is King of saints, has it proceeding out of His mouth, we may understand perhaps that it means principally the written Word ; the Holy Scriptures, which may be literally carried in men's hands : and its two edges will represent the Old Testament and the New : the one full more especially of temporal, the other of eternal promises.

This then is the two-edged sword, with which the saints go out to war : the same which our Lord said He came to send on the earth^h, to divide asunder with its sharp edges those who will serve God and those who will not serve Him. That is, when the sword of the Lord in the hands of His saints, the Bible in

^s Rev. i. 16, xix. 15, 21. ^h S. Matt. x. 34. add S. Luke xii. 57.

the care of the Church, comes to the knowledge of men prepared in heart for it, it pierces sharply into their hearts, dividing them from the things and persons which before they loved best, and often making such separations as our Lord described, when He said, "The father shall be divided against the son and the son against the father: the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother: the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

In this way, not by outward wars and fightings, but by its inward and searching power in men's hearts, did the sword of Christ, borne by His saints, accomplish those great triumphs which are spoken of in the end of this psalm. He was "avenged of the heathen and rebuked the people." He gained the better of the heathen worshippers, and of the nations and people of this world, rebuked them and brought them to a better, to a Christian mind. Their very kings were bound in chains, and their great men in fetters: the chains and fetters of God's holy will and commandments, stronger to believing hearts than any iron, and commanding a certain degree of regard even from them who believe not. So we see it, even in our days: the Church has a wonderful power to keep even the unbelieving world in order. People who, left to themselves, have little or no fear of God, are yet kept from many things by a sort of instinct depending on the presence of God's Church. And thus matters will go on, until the trial-time both of the world and of the Church is over: as the last verse of the psalm teaches: the saints, we are told, carry on Christ's warfare in this way, "to execute on

g g 2

them the judgement that is written :” to bring to an end the great counsel of God, written in the Old and New Testament. Then at the last, when Christ shall be revealed from heaven, His saints will be revealed with Him, and the victory that overcometh the world will be complete. The saints, we know, shall then judge the world. “ⁱThey shall judge the people, and have dominion over the nations, and ” as “ their Lord shall reign for ever,” so they in some mysterious way shall receive crowns and reign with Him. We shall be present at that judgement: we shall all of us behold their glory. May it please God, that we may so follow them here, that when we see them at that day, we may not be like the rich man, beholding Abraham and Lazarus afar off, in despair of ever being where they are, but rather like the friend of the Bridegroom, rejoicing greatly at their voice: rejoicing in the blessed certainty, that, however distant we may be from them, their happiness will overflow on us, by the mercy of their Lord and ours !

I will conclude with the words of a devout and ancient Bishop, from whom principally I have taken this account of the psalmist’s praise of the saints. “ The psalmist,” says he, retracing as it were the particulars of the holy hymn from the end to the beginning, “ the psalmist makes an end thus: ‘ Such honour have all His saints.’ Through all the world, through all the nations thus are the saints employed, thus are they glorified: thus are the high praises of God in their mouths, thus do they rejoice in their beds: so are they joyful with glory, so beautified with salvation; so do they sing their new song, so repeat Hallelujah, with heart, with mouth, with life. Amen.”

ⁱ Wisd. iii. 8.

SERMON XLVIII.

PRAISE TO GOD FROM ALL SAINTS.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

REV. XIX. 5.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great."

CONSIDER what God is; how infinitely above the highest Angels: the only Fountain of goodness, and life, and immortality, and whatsoever is blessed and glorious, either in heaven or in earth. Consider again what we are; mortal, sinful, unworthy creatures; such, that in His infallible Word the title *man* seems to be taken, over and over again, as a sort of proverbial expression, for whatever is weakest and most worthless. Does it not almost seem, as if we might well be afraid to praise Him? As if it were a presumptuous, irreverent thing, so much as to take His Name within our lips, or to make mention of Him at all? Even as it would be a kind of improper liberty, for a criminal, in hopes of being pardoned beyond his deserts, to begin praising and commending the Judge, as though it were his place to pass any kind of sentence upon his superior?

But Almighty God, by His infinite condescension in Holy Scripture, encourages us, not to keep silence.

He declares Himself ready to accept our praise and thanksgiving, as a sacrifice of a freewill offering. Nay, and He has graciously provided against our many misgivings in this matter, giving us one whole book of Scripture, the book of psalms, as a pattern and example of the thoughts which Christians should have in their hearts, and the words which they should bear on their lips, when they come to praise Him.

Here also in the text, we find His approbation yielded, in a very remarkable manner, to the duty and blessing of praising Him, as it has been understood and practised from the beginning by all saints. In the course of S. John's wonderful vision, when the final glory and victory of Christ and His Church began to draw near; when great Babylon, the power of this world, and the bitter enemy of the Church, was on the very point of falling; then "a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great."

What voice was that? It was the Voice of God, for it came out of the throne; out of the unapproachable glory, where none but God was.

It was the Voice of the Lamb of God, of Him Who is set down in glory on His Father's right hand, having "been slain, and redeemed us to God by His Blood." We know it is His Voice, from the manner in which He speaks: "Praise *our* God, all ye His servants;" not *your* God only, but *our* God: for so He most graciously instructed us all to join ourselves in a manner to Him, whenever in our thoughts we present ourselves before the Almighty Father of all. "I ascend," He said, "unto My Father and your Father, and unto My God and your God." In like

manner, here at the very end of the New Testament, He speaks from His everlasting Throne to the whole Church, now represented as triumphing over her enemies, and makes Himself one, in the work of praising God, not with His Apostles only, to whom the message came after His Resurrection, but also with all God's servants, and all who fear Him, of all sorts and degrees, "both small and great."

The occasion, indeed, on which in vision these words were spoken in the prophet's hearing, has not yet taken place. The fall of Babylon, the overthrow of the power of this wicked world, may, for aught we know, be yet at a distance. But it is sure, by the word of prophecy; and the Church by faith looks forward to it day by day. And this day of All Saints, coming yearly, is one token and exercise of her faith.

As often as the day comes, it reminds Christ's faithful people, that we are so much nearer the end and crown of our hard warfare against the kingdom and power of the Evil one: so much nearer that day, when those who now surround us unseen, and wish and pray for us at a distance, shall be openly revealed to our bodily eyes, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

Then shall our Saviour cause us to understand the mystery of His communion with His saints, as in their warfare and sufferings, so in their glorifying and praising God for their victory and deliverance. But as yet we see not, nor understand, but only believe.

And not only on this day, but as often as we praise God in the solemn services of His Church, we do in a manner rehearse and practise the mystery of this

invitation of the Lord to His servants. Every time we come here, we answer, according to our poor weak measure, the call from the everlasting Throne, "Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great."

First, you cannot well, any of you, be ignorant, that one great business of the Church service is, "to render thanks for the great benefits which we have received at God's hand," and "to set forth His most worthy praise." The confession, absolution, and Lord's prayer, may be regarded as making up a kind of private introductory service. The very first thing, therefore, in the public service, properly so called, is for the minister to say, "O Lord, open Thou our lips;" and for the people to answer him, "And our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise;" and then they proceed immediately to praise the most high God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the hymn of glory, which, as you know, they repeat also at the end of every psalm.

The psalms themselves, and the hymns after the lessons, commonly take up at least one fourth of the time appointed for offering up our devotions to God in His Church.

Thus we try to obey the Voice which calls to us out of the Throne, "praise our God, all ye His servants." And we have the comfort and privilege of knowing, that He is with us, Who hath promised to be "where two or three are gathered together in His Name." He is with us, Who even from the throne of His glory condescends to speak to us of God as *our* God; making Himself thereby still one of us, and seeming to promise, that He will offer up our praises as well as our prayers to His Father's throne.

Let no man, therefore, be cast down, should there be but two or three present at any time, in these our assemblies. Let the Church look never so desolate, let the answer of the congregation to the voice of praise sound never so faintly to our outward ears, Jesus Christ, we know, is there, and will offer those praises, with the praises of all saints, before the throne of the Ever-blessed Father; provided we bring them to Him humbly, with a reverent, faithful, and obedient heart.

That is the great point; a reverent and obedient heart; a heart, full of sincere desire to honour God, and keep His commandments. He who brings that with him into the congregation, need not be cast down, if he fail sometimes, nay often, either in hearing or in understanding the psalms and other hymns, which the congregation with mingled voices are presenting to the God of heaven.

It is sometimes, I believe, no small trouble to well-meaning persons, of weak and tender spirits, when they either cannot understand or cannot hear the praises of God in His house. For such the Church has done all in her power, by appointing the holy psalms to be used regularly, which most men know how to read, and those who do not, by diligent attendance may learn to follow with much edification. And where, from deafness or great weakness, a person is shut out from this benefit, it will be a great charity to comfort such a person, concerning his coming into the congregation, and to explain to him, that he is far from being shut out of that spiritual blessing, which they enjoy who sing with the understanding. His coming with a simple purpose to praise

the Lord; his joining with a hearty mind in what little he can understand and hear; his taking patiently and sweetly the irksomeness of listening without hearing, and hearing without understanding: these are so many good signs, that he sings praises with the Spirit, with the good Spirit of God; and so offering thanks and praise, he shall undoubtedly be accounted as honouring God.

But whether for such an one, or for others outwardly more favoured and enlightened, one thing is needful to their reaping this blessing by their praises; and that is, as the psalmist teaches, that they "order their conversation right." No others can praise Him acceptably; no others are invited to praise Him by the Voice from the throne. "Praise our God, *all ye His servants*," says that gracious but awful Voice. *His servants* only are privileged to praise Him; that is, as we should call them, *His slaves*; those who have given themselves up to Him *entirely*; who try to have no will but His; who give up what else would please them best, when they understand it to be displeasing to Him, and take joyfully affliction, labour, self-denial, when He lays it upon them, and would prepare them thereby for His heavenly kingdom.

To this course of life you have all become bound in your Baptism. When the sign of the Cross was made in your forehead, you were marked for the rest of your life to be a servant and soldier of Jesus Christ. If you would know what this profession comes to, look not to the careless easy lives of the ordinary sort of Christians; look not to any living, any modern examples, but go back to those, whose memories we celebrate to-day; consider the blessed saints of old,

Apostles, prophets, martyrs, confessors, "of whom the world was not worthy;" and even in them look not so much to their last triumphant sufferings, to their enduring sharp pains of the body, banishment, martyrdom itself; but rather consider their regular behaviour in quiet times, and in the ordering of every day: watch them, with Daniel, on their knees, three times in every day praying towards God's holy Altar, or rising at midnight, with David, to "give thanks to Him, because of His righteous judgements." See how thoughtful they were, with holy Job, for their families, children, servants, all who depend on them, no less than for themselves, offering the sacrifice of prayer and intercession for them all, day after day. Observe their knees, like S. James's, worn hard with prayer; their bodies, like S. Paul's, kept under and brought into subjection; take notice, how when first the Blessed Comforter came down from heaven to establish His holy Church, they who were touched by His sacred fires counted none of their possessions their own, but renounced them all, parted with them all for Christ's sake, and were content to live, with the rest of Christ's poor, on a daily allowance out of the funds of the Church. Consider these things, and you will have some understanding, what it is to be really a *slave* of Christ, and so to have part in this His invitation to praise Him; you will see, what contempt of the world, what noble carelessness about yourself, what humble devotion, what unwearied charity, you ought to be continually trying to practise, if you would come here and praise God not altogether unworthily.

Nor let any one Christian draw back in indolence

or timidity, as if he, for one, had no part in this merciful invitation of our Saviour. Observe with what encouraging words He concludes it: "Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, *both small and great.*" Fearing God is the great thing; and they who have that in their hearts, how unequal soever in other respects, may come here with all saints, and unite in praising Him. The free and unbounded mercy and grace of Almighty God in this respect is shewn forth by this circumstance in the services of His Holy Catholic Church; that her doors are thrown open to all. In this place, if no where else, all ranks and degrees are equal. The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord, their common Maker, being here to receive their common acknowledgements. The young and the old meet together, offering to Him, of Whom the whole family is named, the one their first-fruits, the other the gathered stores of their whole lives. Here, standing before the same altar, and joining in the same psalms and hymns of thanksgiving, are both the new penitent and the confirmed servant of Christ: he, whose heart God has just touched with bitter thoughts of privileges abused, vows forgotten, warnings slighted, grace received in vain; and he who having, by the help of God's Spirit, kept in some good measure his baptismal vows, comes rejoicing in the sunshine of God's mercy, with the overflowing of a thankful heart; the experienced saint and the young beginner; the solitary student and the just and fair man of business; Lazarus and Zacchæus; Mary and Martha; the aged who feels, how near the church is to the grave, and the child who can but just have a thought

of something awful in this place, making it unlike other places; behold, here they meet altogether, with one voice praising one God, through one Mediator, by one Spirit; exhibiting to the very outward eye the true figure and emblem of that communion and fellowship, in which they are inwardly and spiritually knit, as true members of the mystical body of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. “^a There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

And well may we believe, that the greatest differences belonging to this present world are done away in God's sight, by the common participation of such heavenly and divine grace, since Holy Scripture teaches further, that a much greater difference, a much wider mark of separation than any of these, is done away with by the grace of the Gospel. It unites not only young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, penitent backsliders and aged men sound in faith, but it also has the gift of uniting the living with the dead; the living, warring, hard-working, imperfect saints, with those who are at rest in paradise, and wait only to be made perfect in heaven. For the saints in paradise are unquestionably in the number of those who fear God, that is, who are aware of His awful unspeakable Presence, and own Him with a deep reverential joy: they, therefore, as well as we on earth, are invited by the Voice from the throne to praise God. And they do in a manner praise Him, (doubt it not,) with our solemn assemblies. Why else, throughout the visions of S. John

^a Gal. iii. 28.

in the book of Revelation, are they represented as bearing a part in the blessing, honour, glory, and worship rendered from time to time, in the Apostle's hearing, "unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb," by "every creature that is in heaven and in earth and under the earth?" And why are "white robes given unto them," but to signify their greater advancement and perfection in the same holy joy, which we are feebly endeavouring to practise, when we sing hymns on earth?

Therefore the Church, in that ancient and most beautiful hymn, which sometimes comes in the place of the "Te Deum," and which begins, "O all ye works of the Lord;" the Church, I say, in that hymn, does not scruple, amongst other works of God, to call on the faithful departed to join her in thanking and praising Him. "O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for ever." Indeed, why should she scruple? since the Bible expressly tells us, that when we sing daily to the Most High, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth," we are doing that, which the Angels in heaven cease not from doing day and night. And none can doubt, that in paradise, which is no place of silence, but full of unspeakable words, the like praises are given to the same Divine Being; else would the Church on earth be more like heaven than paradise itself; and it would *not* be better to depart and to be with Christ: contrary to S. Paul's words.

Wherefore the Church, from very early days, has added to the angelic hymn, "The glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs;" all join to praise

and "acknowledge Thee" with "the holy Church throughout all the world." And thus it comes to pass, that the humblest poor man of us all, resorting in faith to this service, may know, for a certainty, that he is bearing a part in the same choir with S. Peter and S. Paul, and all the holy men from the beginning. The least in the kingdom of heaven, when praising God in Church, may thankfully feel his communion with the greatest and most angelic.

Yet more: he may feel his communion with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; Who, as Head and Priest of His Church, is ever present to gather in one, sanctify and offer up the praises and thankgivings of His saints in earth and in paradise; and to make them, after a manner, His own praises and thankgivings; even as His words in the text, saying to His people, "Praise *our* God," cannot but mean that He too, takes part in that praise, as He does, by His Intercession, in our prayers.

Of this merciful privilege, to be vouchsafed to His Church afterwards, He gave a remarkable sign and token, by that paschal hymn, which He sang with His disciples the night before His death, just as they were rising from the table of the last supper, and going out into the Mount of Olives. Who can say, what power and virtue was in the voice of our Blessed Lord, so offered up to His Father, to sanctify the Church's continual offering of psalms and hymns, sung or said, evening and morning, ever since there was a Church, wherever the Name of Christ is named?

Those psalms and hymns, and our other forms of thanksgiving, are indeed Christ's, and not ours; for they are offered in the name, not of individuals, nor of this or that particular congregation, but of that

Body, whereof Christ is the Head, and which can do nothing without Christ.

Remember, then, (the thought is an awful one!) that whenever you sing or say a psalm in this place, you are singing or saying it, not with the saints only, but with Christ: and think what profanation it must be, if to that work you bring a voice used to any kind of bad words; a mind impure, covetous, selfish, unforgiving, irreverent, or in any respect contrary to the known mind of Christ. Let us humble ourselves before God for all our sins in this kind, for surely we have great need; and let us seriously implore His grace, that we may so watch our own hearts and ways, as not to provoke Him, when we come here to join His saints in praising His Father through Him: but, rather, to make every psalm such an exercise of holy reverence and love, as we may hereafter hope to rehearse more perfectly, when "they that fear Him, both small and great," shall see Him and one another face to face in His heavenly kingdom.

Precious to the Lord,
is the death of His saints.

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